LEFFLER, Phyllis Koran, 1945-
L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE: A STUDY OF FRENCH
HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1660-1720.
The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1971
History, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© Copyright by
Phyllis Koran Leffler
1971
L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE
A STUDY OF FRENCH HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1660-1720

DISСЕRТАTION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Phyllis Koran Leffler, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1971

Approved by

Adviser
Department of History
PLEASE NOTE:

Some Pages have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My advisor, Professor John C. Rule, was not only the inspiration behind the topic, but both a friend and a critic throughout. I am particularly grateful to him for his aid. I wish to thank also Professor John Rothney, who read the manuscript carefully, and raised many valuable questions. To Professor Clayton Roberts, who read this study and commented upon it, I wish to express my appreciation. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Donald Kelley and Mical Schneider who, at crucial stages, discussed the topic with me at length and helped me to organize the materials.

I am indebted both to the Folger Shakespeare Library and to the Graduate School of The Ohio State University for the funds for this study. Both of these institutions granted me dissertation fellowships so that I could work full-time on this project.
VITA

April 22, 1945 . . . .  Born - Brooklyn, New York

1966 . . . . . . . . . B.A., Queens College of The City University of New York


1967-1970 . . . . . Teaching Assistant and Associate, Department of History, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1970-1971 . . . . . University Fellowship, The Graduate School, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History

Early Modern European History. Professor John C. Rule

Tudor-Stuart History. Professor Clayton Roberts

Renaissance and Reformation History. Professor Harold Grimm

Political Theory, 1500-1800. Professor David Kettler

iii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS SOURCES</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE ASSIMILATION OF PAST HISTORIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE SPECTRUM OF HISTORICAL INTERESTS</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. HISTORIANS AND THEIR MILIEU</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE: THE FORM</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE: ITS SCOPE</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE: CAUSE AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. THE KING'S APOLOGISTS</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

During the years from ca. 1660 to ca. 1720, there emerged in France a form of historical writing which affected the future development of historiography. This type of history can be termed the *histoire raisonnée*. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze this form of historical writing, to examine the factors which influenced its development, and to place it in the context of the historical thought of both the preceding and succeeding periods.

To facilitate this analysis, the dissertation will be divided into two parts. In Part I, I will examine the factors which influenced the writing of history during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. First, I will describe the awareness of history in France during the reign of Louis XIV. I will analyze both the attitudes of the King toward history, and the intellectual assumptions which affected historical awareness. Second, I will attempt to describe the models used by historians from primarily ancient and sixteenth-century materials. Third, I will depict the broad spectrum of historical activity and interests in seventeenth-century France. Fourth, focusing on the personal and social environment of
the authors in this study, I will portray the milieu in which they operated. Thus, I hope in Part I to depict the historical consciousness of French historians during the period from ca. 1660 to ca. 1720. I further hope to explain the factors which influenced the development or retardation of this consciousness.

In Part II, I will analyze the writings of authors of the *hstoire raisonnée* from an historiographical perspective. First, it will be necessary to reveal the expressed philosophy of history of these authors. To do this, I use both philosophical tracts on history and the introductions or prefaces to historical narratives. Through these materials, I will portray the authors' conceptions of their purpose and their craft. But one must also study the works of history themselves to analyse the form, content, and methods used in the *hstoire raisonnée*. I will therefore examine the organization, style, sources, and documentation of materials in order to reveal these historians as technicians. An historian, however, is also an analyst, either consciously or unconsciously. His analysis enters in part through the scope of the history, in which the author makes known the varied elements which he considers in an historical inquiry. This, then, is the second contribution of the *hstoire raisonnée* which will be discussed. Scope cannot be divorced from an author's analysis of cause. Nonetheless, I have arbitrarily
divided the two for reasons of clarity, and will analyze the treatment of causation as the third important historiographical contribution of seventeenth-century historians. Finally, I will discuss the work of panegyrists, and try to show how their own specific conception of their purpose and their obvious bias limited the historiographical value of their pursuit.

The topic has been defined to cover the years 1660-1720 in French history for at least two reasons. First, and most importantly, this sixty-year period saw the genesis and development of a unique cross-breed of historical scholarship in which authors combined both artistic skills and factual analyses. During the decade of the 1660's and early 1670's, historians began to write history in a manner which was substantively different from the literary accounts of their predecessors. Between 1664 and 1667, Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, Philippe Labbe, and Charles Sorel all published works of historiographical interest which were only superficially similar to the works of the well-known French Renaissance historian, François Eudes de Mézeray. In the early 1670's appeared a very important history by Paul Pellisson, historiographer to the King, in which the author revealed his appreciation for cultural diversity and for historical development. In short, the period of time beginning ca. 1660 saw the birth of a form of narrative history which heretofore has remained unexplored.
The closing date of ca. 1720 can be justified in the same terms. Louis XIV died in 1715. There had been considerable royal censorship during the reign of the "Sun King," but after his death numerous histories appeared which treated his reign more openly. Between the decade 1715 and 1725, for example, noteworthy histories of France and the reign of Louis XIV were written by such authors as Isaac Larrey, Henri Philippe de Limiers, Charles Auguste de La Fare, Vincent Chalons, Gabriel Daniel, and Henri de Boulainvilliers. These works still maintained the framework of a traditional narrative history, but developed the form of the histoire raisonnée to some degree of excellence. Shortly after 1720 appeared the historical works of Enlightenment writers which have been praised frequently by twentieth-century commentators for their historicism. What has not been said, however, is that such historians as Du Bos, Voltaire, and Montesquieu owe a debt to the historical perceptions of authors writing before them. This debt has never been examined. In this dissertation, therefore, I will analyze the historical consciousness of authors writing between 1660 and 1720—that period of time, I believe, in which a new historical consciousness emerged. This consciousness was not developed fully until the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, in the study of historiography, the process of development of a mode of thought is as important as what it becomes in its maturity.
The second reason I have chosen to study the period of the grand siècle stems from its own historical significance. Louis XIV reigned from 1661 to 1715. During this period, France achieved political and military hegemony in Europe, and was regarded by contemporaries as the center of cultural and artistic life. In addition, Louis XIV was intensely aware of his historic role as the King of his country, and often used history to extract comparisons with past rulers. One can argue, therefore, that the King helped to create a historically self-conscious era by means of his own personality and interests. But, in addition to the political predominance of the kingdom, and the historical interests of the King, the period is rich in its intellectual and artistic accomplishments.\(^1\)

Political and religious ideas, literary and linguistic standards, and scientific theories—all in a state of flux—created a sense of intellectual vitality. This intellectual climate affected the growth of historical consciousness as well. Clearly, an historian's ideas about change, causation, scope, form, and sources cannot be divorced from his intellectual environment. Since this period of French history is so intellectually fertile, a study of its historiography should prove rewarding.

\(^1\)This theme has been exhaustively argued by Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: 1680-1715*, trans. J. Lewis May (London, 1964).
This historiographical study will be limited to a consideration of *l'histoire raisonnée* because of its unique characteristics. This type of historical literature appealed to the interests of the seventeenth-century reading public, if we are to judge from its popularity. An

2The clearest explanation of this term can be found in Claude François Menestrier, *Les divers caractères, des ouvrages historiques* (Lyon, 1694), 38-39. Menestrier describes the *histoire raisonnée* as a type of history "... qui a reçu divers ornemens de l'esprit et de l'adresse des Historiens ... " See below, pp. 9-10. Political histories, which relate the conduct of states and maxims of government, and moral histories, which expose the customs and manners of great men fall within this category. See ibid., 52-54. This *histoire raisonnée* is one type of *histoire figurée*, according to Menestrier. This latter term refers to all "ornamented" histories, including natural histories, pictorial histories, epic and dramatic poetry, and novels. See ibid., 43-51.

3There are no specific figures available which break down the types and popularity of historical literature produced. We do know, however, that certain authors who wrote for the specific purpose of making money chose this genre. This is true of Courtitz de Sandras, Bussy-Rabutin, and Jean Le Clerc. See Benjamin Mather Woodbridge, *Gatien de Courtitz, sieur du Verger: Etude sur un précurseur du roman réaliste en France* (Baltimore, 1925); J. Fr. Michaud, ed., *Biographie Universelle* (45 vols.; Graz, Austria, 1966).

There are figures available which attest to the general popularity of history in the seventeenth century. Martin provides figures for the periods 1601-1641 and 1642-1670 which list the names and numbers of historical works in private Parisian libraries. Among the best stocked were works by Paul Emile, Belleforest, Scipion Dupleix, and Commines, thus revealing a taste for the non-erudite histories. See Jean-Henri Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs, et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle: 1598-1701* (2 vols.; Geneva, 1969), I, 510-12. David Thomas Pottage, in *The French Book Trade in the Ancien Regime: 1500-1791* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), 30-31, also has drawn up a list which shows the popularity of both theology and history for the period under study. He also shows us the growing popularity of works in quarto, octavo, and sextodecimo formats. See ibid., 40.

This change in format during the course of the seventeenth
analysis of its form is likely to reveal seventeenth-century attitudes and approaches to history. While not the most scientific and exacting approach to historical scholarship, the *histoire raisonnée* is the form which perhaps best reveals the confusion about the purpose, nature, and content of history on the part of the seventeenth-century literate public in France. By analyzing this type of history, I will be describing the center of a broad spectrum of historical activity. By focusing on the *histoire raisonnée*, I hope to show how many diverse historical interests were united into one hybrid form which combined both artistic and scientific pretensions.

The authors of these works did not make a clear distinction between the *histoire raisonnée* and other narrative histories. In fact, the *histoire raisonnée* was not only a form of narrative history, but also clothed a philosophy of history. Committed to the belief that the historian was both moralist and teacher, authors wanted to insure the fact that their instruction did not go unheeded. They were anxious to expose injustice, excess, and vice, in order to perfect the judgment of the reader. Since

> century is also noted in Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 774. Since almost all works of the *histoire raisonnée* appeared in octavo and sextodecimo format, while the folio format (used for erudite materials) declined, one can argue that this specific form was gaining in popularity.

> This broad range of historical interests will be described in Chapter III.
"the Business of history was more to form a Gentleman than to instruct a soldier or an Officer," historians felt free to diverge from the details to reflect on their significance. From this concern was developed the *histoire raisonnée*.

Many historians of the period alluded to this "reasoned" aspect of historical writing. In the words of Michel Le Vassor, "A plain Narrative without Reflections, and Enquiries into the true and secret causes of Events, and the Portraiture of the chief Actors that appear upon the Stage, is rather a Gazette than a History." Henri Philippe de Limiers agreed with Pierre Bayle that in the writing of history, "... quelques Réflexions un peu animées ..." would be useful. And Gabriel Daniel, generally regarded as an objective historian concerned largely with the accuracy of sources, stated that the historian had an obligation to reflect on the facts which he chose to recount.

Emphasis was placed on the commentary and reasoning

---

of the author because of the historian's conception of his purpose. Charles Auguste de La Fare remarked that a history without the reflections of its author would never be able to provide a "Tableau varié et raisonné" of human life and customs. Henri de Boulainvilliers also referred to the importance of cultural description and associated this with a *histoire raisonnée*. His aim, he claimed, was:

... de donner une Histoire raisonnée de la Monarchie Française, laquelle tirera moins d'autorité de l'exactitude des dates ... que de la juste peinture du caractère des Rois dont elle rapportera les actions, et de celles des moeurs de leurs temps.

The *histoire raisonnée*, then, was seen as a form of historical writing in which the author could deal with materials other than the chronology of events, and could insure the instruction of his reader.

Claude François Menestrier isolated this form from all others and defined it for his contemporaries. The *histoire raisonnée* was

... celle qui a reçu divers ornamens de l'esprit et de l'adresse des Historiens ... en cherchant les ressorts les plus secrets, et remontant jusqu'à

---

9 Charles Auguste de La Fare, *Mémoires et réflexions sur les principaux événemens du règne de Louis XIV* (Rotterdam, 1717), 18.


11 See also Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, quatorzième du nom, roy de France* (Paris, 1699), 4-5; *Mercure Galant, "Affaires du Temps*" (October, 1688, Part II), Au Lecteur.
leur causes en éxaminent les motifs, en épluchent les circonstances, et tirent de ces principes某些反射性... C'est une Histoire raisonnée, qui sans s'arrester à l'écorce, et à l'apparence des choses, va jusqu'à dans la pensée des personnes qui ont agi, découvre leurs intentions, et fait voir sur l'événement des choses qu'ils ont entreprises la sagesse de leur conduite, ou leur défaut de jugement.12

In this first fragment of a sentence, Menestrier states that the author should not be a disinterested party to the narrative of the history. The author, in fact, has a moral obligation to impose his own judgments about the historical situation depicted. In his terms, the histoire raisonnée is clearly distinguished from the chronicle or annal, because in the latter, the author merely states events without analysis or reflection.13 The author of the histoire raisonnée, however, delves into causal analyses, digging far beneath the surface appearances, to discover the basic motivations of human conduct.14 This research


13 This distinction between chronicle and history is described both by Charles de Souvigny Sorel, La science de l'histoire, avec le jugement des principaux historiens tant anciens que modernes (Paris, 1665), 40, and by Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, lxx.

14 Some seventeenth-century commentators have argued that these aims apply not just to the histoire raisonnée, but to all narrative histories written at the time. See, for example, Donneau de Vizé, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis le Grand (10 vols.; n.p., 1697-1703), I, Epistre; Sorel, La science de l'histoire, 40; Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxv. Simon de Riencourt, however, claims that these interests are more appropriate for the author of a biography than for the historian. A history, he claims, should be limited to the depiction of
into causes, Daniel argued, distinguished the history from
the gazette or journal which merely presented disconnected
facts. It likewise was distinct from fiction and the
novel, for while "il faut orner l'Histoire, la fournir, la
soutenir," it must only be so ornamented "... dans les
bornes de la sincerité." Finally, Menestrier claimed
that the historian, once having discovered the motivations
for human actions, has a responsibility to praise or con-
demn. In this way, the histoire raisonnée is related to the
panegyric, or to political and religious tracts, in which
the author's main purpose is to make a positive or negative
judgment.

From the above definition, the reader can see that
the histoire raisonnée also includes numerous genres other
than formal histories. One can readily discount chronolo-
gies and annals, because these are neither narrative nor
descriptive. One can also discount periodical literature
such as gazettes or journals written in the form of annals.
However, many seventeenth-century journalists followed a
narrative approach which was emulated by contemporary his-
torians. While we need not deal with these journals as

15 Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxv.
16 Ibid., xxvii. See also Limiers, Histoire du
règne de Louis XIV, I, Preface, 4.
17 See Chapter III.
formal histories, we must recognize their role in the development of seventeenth-century historiography. This study will, therefore, take them into account. It is not always easy either to distinguish the *histoire raisonnée* from the novel. In the realistic novel, developed during this period, a familiar historical situation was often used as a backdrop, while fictitious characters and events were freely superimposed. Fact and fiction were often combined in the same scene. In addition, many writers of history were also novelists, satirists, or poets, and often mixed one genre with another. For the most part, I have attempted to exclude works of pure literature from my sample. While I have included some of the more reliable works of an author like Courtilz de Sandras, for example, I have excluded his apocryphal forays.

Further, it is not possible to divorce completely the *histoire raisonnée* either from the *mémoire* or the *panegyrique*. Both of these genres exhibit the characteristics of the *histoire raisonnée* described above. The seventeenth-century memorialist, like his predecessors, often delved into personal and psychological motivations of human behavior, while he commented on the significance of key historical events. Many historians, describing scenes from their own experience, called them *Mémoires*,

18 See Chapter I.
19 See Chapter III.
while the scope, form, and content were identical with that of a history. It therefore did not seem appropriate to exclude these works merely on the basis of their titles. When I have found mémoires which are neither very limited in scope nor highly personal in nature, and which are historiographically valuable, I have discussed them as histoires raisonnées. Likewise, the panegyrist, by his descriptions of historical figures, coupled with moral and political judgments about historical actors, belongs to this kind of historical writing. The panegyrist usually professed his absolute adherence to truth, which makes the distinction even more difficult. Yet, the panegyrist rarely questioned or described the motivations of his subject, and therefore, many of his descriptions lack depth and acuity. In fact, I would argue that the panegyrist, because of his aims, actually hindered the development of historical writing in seventeenth-century France. For this reason, I will analyze the work of the panegyrist in a separate chapter.

It would be impossible to deal with all histoires raisonnées written during the grand siècle in this dissertation. A brief glance at Pere Lelong's bibliography (1719) or Lenglet Dufresnoy's Méthode pour étudier l'histoire

20This is true of such works as those by La Fare, Mémoires, and Louis de Rouvroy Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislisle (41 vols.; Paris, 1879).

21See Chapter IX.
will reveal the hundreds of works from which one can choose. I have found it both practical and logical to limit this study, therefore, to all *histoires raisonnées* whose subject was seventeenth-century France or Louis XIV. Moreover, since most of the historians focus on the same subject—France in the seventeenth century—comparisons and contrasts between the works are more readily drawn, and qualitative evaluations can be reached. Finally, since the period from ca. 1660 to ca. 1720 was both historically and intellectually alive, it will be interesting to note how many authors themselves recognized the significance of their age. This study will examine the authors' attitudes toward their King, their State, and their culture. It will deal both with the philosophy of history and the intellectual-political awareness of seventeenth-century French historians.

Any study on historiography must take into consideration the important debate on historicism. In 1936, Freidrich Meinecke published *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, in which he defined historicism as a Weltanschauung of historical development in which writers appreciated the spontaneity and the uniqueness of the individual and the state. Meinecke

---

also believed that the historian should expose general laws but only if they were fused with an appreciation for the individual factor. Historicism (or the historical sense), Meinecke claimed, challenges the view that man has always exhibited the same characteristics. In his work, Meinecke traces the development of historicism to the French, English, and German writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those thinkers who rejected the Cartesian attachment to unhistorical Reason, and who appreciated that each individual responded on the basis of his own spirit and soul planted the seeds for historicism. It was really from the German school of this era— from Leibnitz, Müser, Herder, and Goethe—that the blind adherence to Natural Law was rejected, and the individual was esteemed for his unique personality as well as for his irrational impulses. Historicism reached its culmination with von Ranke, who recognized that all life was spiritually unique, but this stage was prepared by such Enlightenment figures as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Hume. Historicism, it must be emphasized, was not identical with belief in progress, for there was a greater degree of spontaneity and plasticity in the former. To Meinecke, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represented both the culmination of the Natural Law school and the beginning of its collapse. 

23 For a discussion of Meinecke, see Eugene N. Anderson, "Meinecke's Ideengeschichte and the Crisis in Historical Thinking," Medieval and Historiographical Essays
In general agreement with Meinecke are the many modern historians who look to the eighteenth century for models of historicism. Such commentators as Black, Brumfitt, and Cassirer argue that eighteenth-century historians were the first to write secular, realistic accounts, in which they expressed scepticism of miraculous occurrences reported by uneducated and credulous observers. Eighteenth-century historians, including Voltaire, Montesquieu, Gibbon, Hume, and Robertson, first recognized the difficulty and importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, these critics contend. To these Enlightenment authors, we owe the expansion of the scope of traditional historical inquiry to include cultural, social, legal, geographical, and institutional dimensions. Furthermore, some philosophes, although often eclectic and even inconsistent in their thinking, championed the theory of progress. This theory was indeed highly significant for the growth of historical thought, for it provided history with its own raison d'etre—that of exposing the constant

---

growth and development of man's reason throughout the ages. For all these reasons, eighteenth-century historians (and particularly those of France) have been hailed as the founders of our own historical tradition.²⁴

In 1970, however, two works appeared—largely on the same subject—which implicitly challenged this view. Kelley and Huppert studied the historiographical significance of sixteenth-century thinkers, with particular reference to the works of French legal humanists. In their view, the birth of historicism can be traced to sixteenth-century historians of the French Renaissance. Historicism, defined by Huppert as both the 'developmental concepts' and 'individualizing approach,' and by Kelley as "... humanism, individuality, pluralism, relativism, and mutability ...," was the cast of mind of French Renaissance historians.²⁵


Etienne Pasquier, Lancelot Voisin de la Popelinière, François Baudouin, and Pierre Pithou, they argue, employed a critical methodology to study both legal questions and historical scholarship. Philology, for example, was one means to apply both historical thinking and humanist techniques to legal materials. These sixteenth-century authors were also deeply committed to their nation's culture. As a result of this bias, they chose to uncover the origins and early development of French institutions. Through their study of French institutions, they could reveal the reasons for the unique development of their country. This, in turn, led them to a more sophisticated understanding of causation. Finally, in line with their interest in creating a more "perfect" discipline, sixteenth-century historians composed histories of a universal scope. In this way, they added breadth to the historian's craft. Kelley and Huppert therefore contend that it was the sixteenth-century historians who were responsible for the major contributions in historiography usually attributed to their eighteenth-century imitators.26

In view of the existing scholarship on both sixteenth and eighteenth-century historiography, a study of the

seventeenth-century philosophy of history becomes all the more important, especially since historiography must always be investigated as a developmental process. To date, most historians have argued that seventeenth-century narrative historians merely followed the Renaissance techniques of Paul Emile, ignored the contributions of sixteenth-century legal humanists, and divorced history from erudition. In this dissertation, I hope to disprove this contention by showing that seventeenth-century French historians made their own distinct contributions to the development of narrative history, and to the development of historical consciousness. In fact, many of Meinecke's claims about the interests of German historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be applied to French historiography of a corresponding period. I will argue that these historians laid the foundation for the historiographical work of the Enlightenment.

But what is meant by this rather vague term, historical consciousness? It is indeed difficult to isolate the determinants of this consciousness. Each age has its own sense of history, limited by the intellectual climate of that period. For the seventeenth-century, however, I believe that there are three essential factors leading to the historical awareness of authors. These determinants were (1) the attention to "truth," (2) the expansion of the scope of historical inquiry, and (3) the interest in causation. It should be emphasized that not all seventeenth-century authors were aware of the importance of all of these factors. As I will show, static and dynamic theories, and artistic and scientific forms not only existed side by side, but often could be found in the very same work. Historians were forced, for example, to reconcile the static values of classicism with the implications of scientific thought. Quite naturally, a certain amount of confusion resulted, a confusion which was reflected in their historical

28Burke, in Renaissance Sense of the Past, defines historical consciousness as as (1) the sense of anachronism, (2) the awareness of evidence, (3) the interest in causation. See ibid., 1. This definition has affected my own, but I have changed it to suit what I believe constituted the seventeenth-century consciousness. Therefore, the attention to "truth," which included a seeming care for evidence is a more accurate description of the concerns of the seventeenth-century historian. In addition, the sense of anachronism (or perspective or change) seems to me to be more naturally connected with the interest in causation. As the sophistication of the historian increased, his awareness of historical perspective affected his analysis of causation. The two shall therefore be connected in this study.
narratives. The inconsistencies in their thought should not, however, cloud the fact that these historians thought in historical terms, and tried to incorporate this consciousness into their narratives.

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to evaluate French historiography from ca. 1660 to ca. 1720 by analyzing works which followed the form of the histoire raisonnée, and which focused on seventeenth-century France. Whatever general conclusions are reached must be limited by the nature of the sample. While I believe that my sample is representative of the bulk of seventeenth-century historiographical work, I am aware that there may be some distortion. It is possible that historians writing on contemporary national events sometimes lacked objectivity, honesty, and perspective. Further research may serve to prove or disprove this theory. Likewise, historians who worked in a genre other than that of the histoire raisonnée might have shown greater insight or awareness of historical questions. This, too, will need to await further research. My aim is only to evaluate the historical works within a controlled sample, and to reach some conclusions which relate to seventeenth-century historiography in general.
PART I
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS SOURCES

The point of view of the historian is conditioned by the mentality of his own age; the focus of his vision is determined within narrow limits by the conditions of contemporary civilisation. There can be nothing final about his judgments, and their permanent interest lies in the fact that they are judgments pronounced at a given epoch and are characteristic of the tendencies and ideas of that epoch.

These words, written by John B. Bury to describe ancient Greek historiography,\(^1\) are equally applicable to the historical writing of French authors between the years 1660 and 1720. In this chapter, I hope to describe the major influences which affected the growth of a historical consciousness in France.

The first obvious influence affecting the historiography of the period stems from the King himself. As the most powerful political figure in all of France, Louis XIV was clearly in a position to manipulate the printed word to his own advantage. As the most fertile source of patronage in the kingdom, Louis XIV could confer economic rewards upon the authors of works of his liking. As the

---

most prestigious individual within the kingdom, Louis XIV could influence opinion by the mere fact of his position. Therefore, if we are to examine the ideas and tendencies of seventeenth-century historiography, we must portray the attitudes and approaches of the King toward history.

An equally important influence on the development of historiography was the maturation of ideas in other disciplines. To some extent, of course, the political, religious, and literary thought of the period was likewise the product of the King's wishes. Nonetheless, to the extent that these theorists explored seventeenth-century assumptions with regard to change, truth, and evidence, their independent effect on the development of historical thinking must not be minimized. The thought of the period was in a state of constant flux: Cartesian mathematical deductivism gave way to the empirical analyses of some of the philosophes, Jansenist religious fervor was replaced by the naturalism of the Deists, royalist monarchical absolutism was superseded by the comparative institutional politics of the parlementaires. Historians, subject to these rapid changes in intellectual positions, often posited inconsistent arguments. Consequently, after examining the influence of the King, we will analyze the impact of other ideas on the historical consciousness of French authors.
The power of a king is dependent on his reputation, Louis XIV told his son. "La réputation fait souvent elle seule plus que les armées les plus puissantes. Tous les conquérants ont plus avancé par leur nom que par leur épée." If the reputation of the king were crucial to his success, how could a king consciously develop an image which would be feared, respected, and loved?

Louis XIV recognized the political importance of creating an image of grandeur and of power, and he used history to help him do so. The image he sought to create was based, at least in part, on a comparison with past historical figures. Conscious of the function of the written word in formulating the mystique of grandeur, Louis manipulated the written history of his own reign to suit his political purposes. In other words, Louis both used the history of the past and controlled the history of the present, in an effort to portray a specific image of kingship. In dictating his Mémoires, Louis acted as a historian of his own reign, depicting his motivations, analyzing those of others, and commenting on the purpose of history. Thereby, he revealed his own historical consciousness and created an awareness in others of the value of history. As we shall see, Louis XIV's conceptions of historical

---

2Jean Longnon, ed., Mémoires de Louis XIV (Paris, 1927), 224; see also 31. (Hereinafter cited as Mémoires de Louis XIV.)
development did not always further the growth of historical thinking during this period.

The King's Views on His Office

Louis XIV maintained a traditional view of the role, power, and image of the French monarch. Perceiving himself as part of a long tradition of powerful heads of State, he tried to emphasize the attributes that placed him within this tradition. The monarch, according to Louis, was marked by well-defined attributes which never changed. While Louis was conscious of a historical tradition of a powerful monarchy, he tended to ignore the characteristics which differentiated sovereigns from one another. To be sure, monarchs changed, borders fluctuated, kings ruled well or poorly, but the eternal traits of the monarch were never dependent on such tenuous detail. In the manipulation of his own heroic stature, Louis adhered to a static definition of moral and political character. History was important because it revealed these unchanging concepts. History was also important to memorialize the present for future readers. As we shall see, Louis recognized the role of the literary arts in creating historical testimony for the future. Thus, while Louis was aware of the importance of history, he had little realization of the development or evolution of society.

In many ways, Louis perceived himself as part of a continuing medieval tradition. To medieval theorists the royal dynasty was perpetual, royalty was immortal, and the
Crown was a corporate public entity. The principles of continuous succession and corporate perpetuity coincided in a notion termed *dignitas*.\(^3\) The king's dignity and rights had to be maintained for the good of the entire realm, and therefore, became a public attribute of kingship. Louis combined this medieval adherence to *dignitas* with a more contemporary dedication to the credo of classicism. During his own reign, he emphasized the grandeur of his being, the elevation of his office, and the propriety of his court. Louis made himself the center of a classical, formal structure\(^4\)—both to solidify his power and to maintain the traditions of the French monarchy. In part, the administrative changes undertaken to solidify the hierarchy were an effort to maintain, in the grandest way possible, the universal and timeless attributes of kingship.

In his *Mémoires*, Louis XIV explicitly confirms his adherence to this medieval view of the attributes of kingship. Interested primarily in instructing his son, Louis often diverged from his explanations of historical situations to set down political maxims, in a manner reminiscent of the


histoire raisonnée. He argues that the king holds the place of God on earth, and therefore, is endowed with greater knowledge and authority than his subjects. Each class, be they laborers, artisans, merchants, financiers, judges, or ecclesiastics, contributes something to the sustenance of the monarchy. The wise monarch will, therefore, act as a father of his people, open to their needs and suggestions, but ready to punish every breach of faith or act of injustice for the future good of the individual. Time and again, he advises his son of the necessity of exercising his authority to the fullest:

Oter la rigueur aux lois, c'est ôter l'ordre, la paix et le repos au monde, c'est ôter à soi-même la royauté.

... dans les occasions importantes ... c'est à nous, mon fils, à choisir ce qu'il faut faire en effet ... car la décision a besoin d'un esprit de maître ...

Throughout history, Louis argues, examples exist of the malfunctioning of countries in which the ruler has limited power. Alphonse VI of Portugal, for example, was deposed in 1667 both as a result of his own personality and the customs of his country. As a consequence of their actions,

---

5 Mémoires de Louis XIV, 228-29.
6 Ibid., 216.
7 Ibid., 217.
8 Ibid., 138.
9 Ibid., 34.
the Portuguese, Louis claims, should be likened to criminals and to sinners:

Il faut assurément demeurer d'accord que, pour mauvais que puisse être un prince, la révolte de ses sujets est toujours infiniment criminelle. Celui qui a donné des rois aux hommes a voulu qu'on les respectât comme ses lieutenants, se réservant à lui seul le droit d'examiner leur conduite. 10

If kings are the lieutenants of God on earth, are they therefore controlled by their master in their every act? Louis claims that kings do have some degree of free will and independent power, because God does not intervene in the natural order which He created. 11 However, God showers His blessings on His favorites by giving them the wisdom and ability so that they can become respected and powerful.

In short, the king is viewed by Louis XIV as an unchanging archetype. Consistent with medieval theory, the king is seen as a figure of authority, the father of his flock, the servant of God, and the fountainhead of justice. The obligation of the king is to maintain this unchanging tradition.

Louis recognized that historical imagery could be used to evoke the notion of the power and grandeur of the king. To create the myth of a classical god or hero, Louis used the imagery of Roman emperors, mythological gods, and

10 Ibid., 254-55.
11 Ibid., 118-19.
the sun. These images appeared on buildings, in books, during ceremonies, and in works of art. Public ceremony was controlled by a code of regulations designed to make the King the central heroic figure of the reign. Even the most private royal functions, like dressing or sleeping, were made a cause for public deification.

In the early 1660's, Louis had conceived of the idea of making Versailles a shrine to his glory. Both mythological and Roman themes were exploited in order to elevate the power and prestige of the monarch. Charles Le Brun, the royal painter, decorated the ceiling of the Hall of Mirrors by depicting the King as a Roman emperor, surrounded by classical gods and goddesses. The iconography on the theme of Appollo at Versailles, and the famed motto Nec pluribus impar, have often been described. As G. R. R. Treasure has written: "Altogether Versailles was a vast allegory, in which Louis' gifted craftsmen abandoned the finer points of detail in favour of a comprehensive image of grandeur."

In all other royal palaces as well, Louis used


15 Ibid., 272.
classical imagery to elicit universality. Most striking are the many paintings, coins, and sculpture in which Louis is presented in the garb of a Roman emperor. In this way, Louis was depicted as a heroic figure, without regard to time or circumstances. Classical imagery and formalism was a major way in which Louis controlled his image. This was part of the propaganda of his reign. While he relied on historical motifs, he used these motifs to elicit static, eternal, universal, classical traits.

The King as Historian

The Mémoires of Louis XIV, written in the decade of the 1660's, allow us to evaluate the King as an historian of his own reign. Either by design or by implication, Louis touches upon such issues as the purpose of history, the subject matter of the historian, the causes of events, the motivations of leaders, and the circumstances of a historical situation. In comparison with most panegyric histories of the reign, the Mémoires have greater historiographical value. The King's analyses are politically astute, and exhibit some appreciation for historical development, for causal analyses, and for historical evidence. In comparison with other narrative historians of the period, however, Louis' historical sense was not particularly pronounced. Since the King was in a position...

16 Mousnier, XVIe et XVIIe siècles, 277.
to control the printed word, the histories commissioned and approved by him were likely to be modelled after his conception of historical writing. Therefore, we must describe these notions as they emerged from his Mémoires.17

For Louis XIV, history was a practical discipline whose primary purpose was to serve didactic and propagandistic ends. One reason for writing his memoirs was to leave a favorable account of his early reign for posterity. Historians of his reign, Louis contends, either wilfully or through ignorance, may miscalculate the real motives for his actions. Therefore, he will explain his own motivations and plans without disguise, so that his son will have a means "de ... redresser l'histoire"—to put history right.18

17 Longnon explains that the preparatory work was begun by Colbert, who kept a chronicle and historical notes from 1661-1664. Paul Sonnino indicates that after 1665, Colbert actually began to draft a document which could be used as the King's Mémoires. Starting in 1666, Louis himself began to keep notes (feuilles), which were collaborated and extended by Périgny. During this period, we know that Louis was influenced by the writings of Machiavelli. Périgny's method was to work from the notations of Louis XIV, conferring with him as the Mémoires took shape. Colbert's work for the years 1661 and 1662 was revised by Périgny into a historical narrative. Périgny died in 1670 and Paul Pellisson (secretary to the King) revised the section for 1661 and 1662 once again. When the Dutch War broke out, work was again suspended. Thus, the Mémoires remain in two parts, 1661-1662, and 1666-1668. See Jean Longnon's introduction to Mémoires de Louis XIV, 6-8; Paul Sonnino, ed. and trans., Mémoires for the Instruction of the Dauphin (New York, 1970), 3-7. The authenticity of Louis' Mémoires is also discussed in Mousnier, État et société, 76-82.

18 Mémoires de Louis XIV, 13.
His Mémoires were a means to review the historical events of his reign and to offer apologies and explanations for his actions. He was in a position to act as his own panegyrist.

As we have previously indicated, the Mémoires were also written to instruct Louis' son. To this end, this history is filled with moral and political maxims on the nature of good leadership. Louis explicitly states that the Mémoires fulfill his duty to instruct his offspring:

Mon fils, beaucoup de raisons ... m'on fait résoudre à vous laisser ... ces Mémoires de mon règne et de mes principales actions. Je n'ai jamais cru que les rois, ... fussent dispensés de l'obligation commune des pères, qui est d'instruire leurs enfants par l'exemple et par le conseil.\footnote{Ibid., 11-12.}

Did Louis XIV believe that these maxims or examples could be applied without regard to the fluctuations of time or circumstances? Although the style and form of his Mémoires seems to support this contention, Louis occasionally reveals a more sophisticated awareness of the multiplicity of factors involved in decision making.

A king, he writes, must allow his own good sense to operate.\footnote{Ibid., 22.} But if good sense is the key to intelligent action, why bother, Louis asks, to write Mémoires, since the maxims and experience of others cannot serve as a guide to action?\footnote{Ibid., 117, 113-14.} The answer lies in the King's definition of...
reason and good sense. These qualities are not developed in abstraction from the political realities and customs of a nation:

Mais ce dégoût qui nous prend de nos propres raisonne-
ments n'est pas raisonné; car l'application nous vient principalement de la coutume, et le bon sens ne se forme que par une longue expérience, ou par une méditation réitérée et continuelle des choses de même nature ... 22

By relating the history of his own reign, Louis believed that he would be depicting the traditions and customs of the French monarchy, thereby providing his reader with historical experience. In this way, history would serve a didactic purpose.

However, Louis XIV also recognized that while experience and training could provide wisdom, a king would have to evaluate each historical situation for its unique circumstances. His words are worthy of quotation:

... il y a une grande différence entre les lumières générales [i.e., maxims] qui ne servent ordinaire-
ment qu'à discours, et les particulières qu'il faut presque toujours suivre dans l'action. Les maximes trompent la plupart du temps les esprits vulgaires; les choses sont rarement comme elles devraient être ... . L'industrie est à relever les circon-
stances particulières, pour en profiter ... .23

In other words, despite the fact that Louis saw the office of kingship as a static institution, he realized that both the ruler and the historian had to be conscious of fluctu-
ating circumstances.

22 Ibid., 118.
23 Ibid., 113; see also 102.
In the accounting of historical events, Louis often addressed himself to the particular circumstances or motivations which inspired his action. Here, however, his vision seems more limited. As a political man, Louis recounted almost exclusively the political determinants of historical situations. He reveals that his own actions were largely motivated by his quest for power. Whether in his military and diplomatic relations with Spain, the Empire, and Flanders, or in the marriage alliance of his brother with Henrietta, sister of Charles II of England, or in his internal reorganizations, Louis was moved by his personal interest in political advantage. He sees himself in Tacitean terms—as a master of political intrigue and political analysis.

Since political power was his aim, Louis was able to justify all his actions in terms of his political success. Success was its own moral justification. Consequently, we find Louis XIV writing implicit Machiavellian descriptions of his own motivations. Discussing the negotiations over the Vatteville affair, Louis describes his own response to the death of Don Louis de Haro, Spain's principal minister, in the following terms:

Je me servis de la conjoncture: je pris pour déjà décidées, avec des ministres nouveaux et encore incertains de leur conduite, toutes les conditions

---

24 Ibid., 46, 55, 45, 71, respectively.
qui lui avaient seulement été proposées, pour avoir encore moyen de leur en demander d'autres.25

In other words, certain circumstances demand dishonest conduct, which a wise king must be prepared to undertake. He must understand that the reasons which are asserted by ministers are not the same as their hidden motivations.26 All men act in their self-interest; the wise ruler, as well as the good historian, will look for these personal motivations of conduct.

Likewise, Louis tends to view other political figures in the same terms. It is revealing to review his treatment of the diplomatic insult by the Baron de Vatteville, the Spanish ambassador to England, in 1661. Vatteville's assault on the French train was no accident, according to Louis. Vatteville's anger had been inspired by the marriage of Charles II to the Princess of Portugal, which he had been unable to prevent. The King of England was motivated solely by the desire to prevent "toute sorte de bruit et d'émotion" in his capital city. And Louis would not stand to see his own rights disregarded by Vatteville, for this would constitute an affront to French dignity.27 All political figures, including Oliver Cromwell of England,28 are analyzed as

25 Ibid., 80-81.
26 Ibid., 251-52.
27 Ibid., 74-77.
28 Ibid., 105-106.
political aggrandizers.

In short, Louis XIV appreciated the variety of pressures--personal, national, and international--which stimulated political responses. He also recognized that the unique circumstances of each situation precluded the application of generalized maxims. However, he nonetheless believed that maxims could offer an initiation into the ways of princes. And in reviewing the history of his own reign, he limited his analysis to the distinctly political determinants of behavior.

The King as Patron and Censor

Recognizing the importance of the contemporary written word as historical evidence, Louis determined to control the history of his own reign in even more direct ways. To form the history of the present and the future, Louis patronized both arts and letters. Royal patronage, of course, had existed from the Middle Ages; Louis merely extended the use of this system in a regularized fashion to periodicals, history, science, painting, and literature. In

30 Pottinger, French Book Trade, 55. The patronage system of support was significantly extended under Richelieu. See Etienne Thuau, Raison d'état et pensée politique à l'époque de Richelieu (Paris, 1966), 177; Mousnier, XVIe et XVIIe siècles, 273.
this way, Louis controlled the writing of the history of his own reign.

Louis XIV did not initiate patronage and censorship of the press. Some of the periodicals supported by Louis XIV originated during the reign of his father. In 1611, for example, the Mercure Français was founded, and in 1631, the Gazette de France was begun under the auspices of Richelieu. Publication of the Gazette continued to be supported by Louis XIV. This appeared to be an objective fact sheet of news releases, which could be used by present and future historians, diplomats, and political commentators. In reality, it included varied information pleasing to the government officials, on such subjects as world news, science, literature, military events and the court. Commentary and reflections were absent, suggesting an objective presentation of facts, but only material favorable to the monarchy was included. These were true historical pages, which both Richelieu and Louis XIV realized would serve their image well. To the Gazette were added the Journal des Savants in 1701 and the Mercure Galant in 1710.

31 Bourgeois and André, eds., Les sources, IV (Journaux et pamphlets), 26; Louis Eugène Hatin, Bibliographie historique et critique de la presse périodique française (Paris, 1866), 7.

32 Bourgeois and André, eds., Les sources, IV, 10. The Journal des savants existed since 1665 as an independent journal. However, in 1701, its founder, Denis de Sallo, was forced to resign and the publication was subsequently controlled by Pontchartrain.
Financially supported by the Crown, the French press became a political organ. Letters, memoirs, edicts, and ordinances were reproduced faithfully to serve as a record of the accomplishments of the reign. Thus, the King was aware of the significance of documentary history, but was also aware of the need to select carefully the documentary material left for future generations.

Government patronage was used even more effectively to establish royal academies, whose purpose was to glorify the cultural and political achievements of France and of her King. By patronizing the arts, Jean-Baptiste Colbert argued, the King could also centralize his control over artistic productivity. To this end, between 1661 and 1671, the academies of Dance, Painting and Sculpture, Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, Science, Music, and Architecture were founded. The French Academy, supported by the government, continued its work of the purification of the French language, presenting its dictionary to Louis in 1694. This work exemplified the century's concern with language—a concern apparent in historical works as well. The Académie d'Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres completed its major work, the Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de

---


34 Wiley, Formal French, 84-90.
Louis le Grand in 1701. Through this folio edition of close to 300 pages, the history of the reign of Louis XIV is memorialized. Each page bears a picture of a medal, an historical explanation, and a description of the medal. Using a tone both elevated and controlled, the Preface to the work establishes beyond doubt that the academicians saw themselves as historians offering an account of the reign for posterity:


The inscriptions and medals of the reign were used to eulogize and memorialize the deeds of the King in an historical account. In this way, Louis used his patronage to encourage the creation of a panegyric history of his reign. It seems clear, then, that he appreciated the

---

35 L’Académie Royale des Médailles et des Inscriptions, Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, avec des explications historiques (Paris, 1702), Preface, c. Even the title of this work reveals its historical nature.

36 The historical nature of this work was recognized and commented upon by Henri Philippe de Limiers. He wrote: "Les Academiciens nouvellement établis commencèrent l’Histoire de Louis le Grand par Médailles. Ce dernier travail devint leur principale ou plutôt leur unique occupation, par le soin qu’ils prirent de tourner à la gloire du Roi tous les évenemens de son Règne." (Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 105.)
importance of favorable contemporary histories. Royal academies were one means to stimulate such apologies.37

If the writing of history were the aim, no more direct means could be found than the use of royal historiographers. The royal office of historiographe dates from the reign of Catherine de Médicis, who commissioned Pierre Paschal to write a history of the period in return for a pension.38 Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the title of historiographe du France or historiographe du roi39 was held by some of the leading intellects of the day, including Bernard du HaiIan (1535-1610), Pierre Matthieu (1563-1621), Scipion Dupleix (1569-1661), Théodore Godefroy (1580-1649), Jean de Sirmond (1589-1649), and Charles Sorel (1599-1674).40 In the period

37 Charles Sorel, historiographe de France in the 1660's, proposed the creation of an academy of history. The academy's purpose would be to write the "... Histoire de son glorieux Règne, afin qu'elle serve d'instruction à toute la Terre .... " (Sorel, La science de l'histoire, 54.) Such an academy was never established, but Louis had many other ways to encourage the writing of memorials to him.

38 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, I, 434.

39 The distinction between these two offices is not clear. Charles Sorel (cf. footnote 37) claimed that the office of historiographe de France was created by Henry III as a unique office and the title could therefore not be revoked. The office of historiographe du Roi, he claimed, was unlimited and revokable at the King's pleasure. Even if such a distinction had originally existed, it had disappeared by the seventeenth century and the terms were often used interchangeably. See Emile Roy, La vie et les œuvres de Charles Sorel, sieur de Souvigny (Paris, 1891), 350.

40 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, I, 434-35.
after 1660, Colbert, Louis' trusted minister, recognized the value of this office. In 1662, he turned to Jean Chapelain, the most knowledgable person with regard to the literary talent in the kingdom, for a list of people to serve the Crown in the writing of its history.\footnote{Ibid., II, 667-68; see also Sonnino, Mémoires, 4.} After Louis rejected Perrot d'Ablancourt, a Protestant, the appointment fell to Paul Pellisson, himself a former Protestant. Pellisson was required to accompany the King on his expedition to Franche-Comté and to write its history. Pleased with the results, Louis ordered Pellisson to construct a history of the reign, and offered him a pension of 6,000 francs.\footnote{J. Fr. Michaud, ed., Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne (Paris, 1880), XXXII, 414.} By 1677, Louis became interested in using the finest literary talent available to write his history, and therefore called Jean Racine and Nicolas Boileau to his service. For this purpose, Louis was prepared to pay handsomely. Racine earned 14,000 francs per year as historiographe de France, with traveling expenses amounting to 145,000 francs in six years.\footnote{Pottinger, French Book Trade, 89. Pottinger states that the maximum total spent per year by Louis XIV on pensions was 375,000 francs. (Pottinger, ibid., 88.) From 1661 on, Mézeray, historiographe de France, earned 3,600 livres by his title. (Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 668.)} Charles Sorel, François Eudes de Mézeray (1610-1683), Paul Pellisson (1624-1693), Jean Racine (1639-1699), Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711), René...
Richard (1654-1727), Jean Donneau de Visé (1640-1710), Puget de La Serre (ca. 1600-1665), Claude Charles Guyonnet de Vertron (ca. 1650-1715), and Henri Stuard de Bonair (?) all received offices and pensions from the Crown to produce laudatory histories of their King. They were not merely his apologists. They also helped to mold the history of the period by distorting or neglecting embarrassing details.

Royal historiographers were also employed to collect and arrange historical materials. Colbert again is to be credited with the development of the royal library. He personally appointed the most competent archivists, the Dupuy brothers, and dismissed the incompetent Varillas. Under Colbert's direction, the library grew from 17,000 to 40,000 printed volumes by his death in 1683. These efforts were then continued by Louvois: in the bibliothèque du Roi were collected and indexed both foreign and domestic documents.\(^4\)\(^4\) Dispatches and memoranda were saved during Louis' reign, and from them were created the French Royal Archives. Thus, it was during the reign of Louis XIV that historical evidence was systematically collected, and used to glorify the deeds of the King.

As valuable as it was to support historians or academies to produce works in praise of the monarch, it was equally important to prohibit unfavorable commentary. Only if negative views were non-existent could Louis be assured

\(^4\)\(^4\) Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 670-71.
of heroic stature and eternal praise. In order to control his image for the present and the future, Louis tightened and extended the censorship machinery.

Controls and reprisals became more accentuated throughout the seventeenth century. In 1617, Louis XIII required two copies of each printed work deposited in the Bibliothèque Royale. In 1638, two copies had to be presented to the Chancellor's office. By 1653, Mezarin concentrated responsibility into the hands of three or four royal censors under the direction of the Chancellor. This number grew to fifty-six for the period 1699-1704. Under Louis XIV, an entire censorship organization was created; imprisonment and disgrace became well-known from the year 1657. Unfavorable comment was controlled both by punishing authors, if known, and by limiting printing establishments. In 1667, the Conseil de Police forbade the printing of any book without a royal seal. By 1679, the number of printers in Paris fell from seventy-nine to sixty-three. Anyone caught

---

46 Pottinger, French Book Trade, 64.
47 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 765.
48 Ibid., 662 ff; see also MacPherson, Censorship Under Louis XIV; Pottinger, French Book Trade, 59 ff; Bourgeois and André, eds., Les sources, IV, 6-8.
49 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 683, 685. For a discussion of censorship laws, see Ibid., 678-95.
reading, printing, or possessing forbidden periodicals or books was subject to imprisonment, suspension from his trade, banishment, or even death. Between 1600 and 1756, over 800 authors, printers, booksellers and print dealers were sent to the Bastille.

Many of the historians and commentators under study here suffered for their honesty under the hands of Louis XIV. Mézeray lost part of his pension for his criticism of the unfair impôts required of the bourgeoisie. Both Bussy-Rabutin and Courtilz de Sandras, writers of political satire, literature and history, paid for their humor with imprisonment in the Bastille. Hay de Chastelet likewise went to the Bastille for his forthright views on the necessity of political and economic reform. These reprisals were bound to stimulate fear and to silence opposition.

50Pottinger, French Book Trade, 76. Among the forbidden periodicals were the Mercure galant, Nouvelles de la republique des lettres, Bibliothèque universelle, and Nouveau journal des savants (Adam, Histoire de la littérature française, V, 36-37). For specific details on the printers sent to the Bastille after 1657, see Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 662-64, and MacPherson, Censorship Under Louis XIV, 44-45. MacPherson also gives evidence of authors who were burned or imprisoned for religious works (Censorship Under Louis XIV, 20-24).

51Pottinger, French Book Trade, 79.


53MacPherson, Censorship Under Louis XIV, 99-100.

54Michaud, Biographie universelle, VIII, 7-8.
There is no doubt that the knowledge of censorship was widespread, and that many authors were frightened by the censor's arm. Henri Philippe de Limiers commented from Holland on the impossibility of a Frenchman writing the truth about the reign. Michel de Marolles, in the preface to his *Histoire des Roys de France*, admits that he has falsified certain aspects of the reign. Nowhere can we find a better statement of the espionage practiced by Louis than in this revealing statement by Saint-Simon:

\[\text{L'invention d'un lieutenant de Police tel qu'il est devenue fut un autre art politique d'un usage infini} \]
\[\text{... l'espionnage répandu dans tous les lieux publics de Paris, estendu jusque dans les églises, les monastères, les maisons particulières, les hostels, pour écumer et rapporter ce que chacun disait et pensait ...} \]

In short, Louis created great trepidation amongst historians and commentators of his reign. By controlling the writing of history, literature, and political thought, Louis also controlled the sources of his future evaluators.

---


58 This is not to say that Louis was completely successful. The practical way to escape the arm of the law was to turn to the clandestine press, which was established both in provincial centers and foreign cities, in Holland, England, and Germany. Publishers, authors' names, and places of publication were often forged or fictitious. Through
Louis XIV revealed his historical consciousness by the use of historical imagery, by the writing of his own Mémoires, by his encouragement of favorable commentary in the press, academies, and offices he created, and by the censorship of his opposition. His awareness of the political uses of history, both for his present power and future reputation, did not extend to a consciousness of historical development. His view of the world remained relatively stationary, which is what enabled him to use historical imagery so freely. Louis likened himself to the Roman emperors, and often the inscriptions on medals, jetons, and coins pictured him as such. Moreover, he had no appreciation of the importance of historical erudition or objectivity. History, in his mind, served a distinctly moral and political purpose; facts often were sacrificed for these higher values. While Louis emphasized the central role of history and of the historian, he also helped to create a crisis in historical erudition. It is by no means irrelevant that Louis decided upon two poets, Racine and Boileau, as royal historiographers. History was a literary art

this clandestine press, we can find a significant amount of hostile or negative comment both in periodicals and books to counterbalance the eulogistic accounts of the reign. See Pottinger, French Book Trade, 74-75; Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 594, 732-56; MacPherson, Censorship Under Louis XIV, 95; Louis Eugene Hatin, Les gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris, 1865), 19.

59 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 841-42.
whose purpose was to serve both political and moral ends. Material in support of these ends was carefully saved for posterity in the archives, library, and in official accounts. Material contrary to these ends was severely censored. Louis XIV utilized history as a pragmatic tool. While he made history into an important discipline in the seventeenth century, he actually minimized the importance of careful erudition, objective presentation, and a philosophy of historical development.

**Intellectual Currents**

The historian's sense of perspective, his attitude toward evidence, and his concept of causation arise from the intellectual currents to which he is exposed. The ideas of the period 1660-1720—whether political/religious, literary, or scientific—affected the growth of historical thinking. As thought about politics, religion, science, man, and literature changed, past ideas and attitudes came into new focus, and were re-evaluated.

Many seventeenth-century thinkers assumed the existence of a permanent and unchanging world order. The political theory of absolutism, and the literary theory of classicism pre-supposed that the values of order, power, and morality were eternal truths. These ideas, however, were challenged by the end of the seventeenth century, and were replaced with arguments more sympathetic to a concept of
historical development and change. The Scientific Revolution, with its emphasis on mathematical and empirical verification, and its quantitative analysis of matter and motion, helped to secularize ideas about causation and change. All these intellectual attitudes had a pronounced effect on the growth of an historical awareness in France.

Political and Religious Thought

In his conception of kingship, Louis XIV combined a belief in the medieval attributes of the prince with more current theories of divine right. In the medieval world configuration, the universe was viewed as an organic whole. Order was created by establishing a hierarchical system of command: all inferior forces were subordinated to a single controlling force. A complicated scale of mutual obligation existed, so that both subject and king were parties to a contractual relationship. The king’s power was limited by his obligations to his people. But at the same time it was argued that God was the true Monarch of the system: all human power issued from His command. The secular monarch, therefore, held a mystical, quasi-divine power which could neither be challenged nor understood.60 This divine-right theory of monarchy was often given in explanation of the king’s power during the sixteenth and early seventeenth

60Medieval political theory is discussed in Otto Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Age (Cambridge, 1900), 1-35; see also Kantorowicz, King’s Two Bodies, 310.
centuries.

Louis XIV adhered to this somewhat inconsistent image of kingship. Likewise, Jacques Bossuet, both in his Discours sur l'histoire universel (1681) and in his posthumously published Politique tirée de l'écriture sainte (1709) reiterated the assumptions that human society has a religious and divine character, and that political authority has an intangible, sacred dimension. God, according to Bossuet, is omnipresent and omnipotent in the control of human affairs. One can never rationally understand the ultimate causes of events, because particular events depend on providential will. All power and all change emanate from God. Bossuet, then, had no interest in depicting the human and historical origins of government, or in explaining the cause of events. The office of kingship necessarily was a mystery. The individual subject could never analyze the King's motivations and should never question his decisions. Since the individual is unable to understand God's will, he can have no control over his environment or his life. History, properly written, would reveal this religious nature of secular power.  

absolutism was non-secular, non-developmental, and authoritarian. Such thinking, as long as it was prevalent, was an obvious hindrance to the development of historical consciousness during the seventeenth century.

Absolute power could be defended, however, without recourse to mysticism. The contract theory of government was one means to overcome a purely religious basis for the establishment of a political community. The contract theory was used both to justify absolute power, as did Hobbes and Spinoza, and to challenge absolutism, as had the Huguenots and Catholics during the French Wars of Religion.62 By appealing to a contract, these writers did not necessarily have a particular historical situation in mind, but they did find a rational justification for authority.

The supporters of raison d'État philosophy also challenged the religious nature of divine-right theory. Such early seventeenth-century political theorists as Guez de Balzac, Hay du Chastelet, Matthieu de Morgues, Jean de Silhon, and most importantly Richelieu, did not derive the idea of political power and the State from the divine nature of the universe. Rather, they argued that absolute power could be justified primarily by the 1200-year historical tradition of the French monarchy. The State and the ruler were not defined primarily through spiritual attributes. Power was justified by precedent, and the degree of power

62 Lemaire, Lois fondamentales.
attained was a function of the prestige and rational ability of the individual king. Following Tacitus' emphasis on political intrigue and calculation, adherents of raison d'état theory argued that power could be expanded by rational means. They suggested that man was capable of establishing a civil order divorced from supernatural control. Some men, notably rulers, were even capable of imposing their will on society and becoming its masters. These men could learn to rationally understand their environment and to control it. The application of reason, however, could not always effectively control the outcome of events. One must also recognize the significance of circumstantial reality. These realities limit the degree to which historical precedent could be followed.

Étatiste philosophy is ambiguous, but nonetheless important for the development of history. On the one hand, these thinkers justified political absolutism through theories of divine right; they were, however, also realistic and essentially secular thinkers. The impact of this philosophy on the development of historical consciousness should not be discounted as a result of some inconsistencies.

63 Thuau, Raison d'état, 360-61.
64 Tacitus became an extremely popular figure in the seventeenth century. Many historians cite him as their inspiration. This will be discussed in Chapters II and IV below.
65 Thuau, Raison d'état, 367, 389.
66 Ibid., 381-84.
Theorists of raison d'état emphasized the free will of man, argued that events could be rationally understood, laicized political thought, and recognized the effect of circumstance in history. In their hands, political thought became both secular and rational. These ideas, when applied to historical narratives, would help immeasurably to treat history as a rationally comprehensible and secular phenomenon.

The spokesmen for raison d'état philosophy tended to ignore all motivations for conduct which were not based on political calculation and intrigue. By the late seventeenth century, this narrow attachment to Tacitean analysis was challenged by classicists and empiricists alike. Both Racine and Saint-Réal argue that one must analyze the secret passions of the human heart to discover the reasons for human action. Bayle asserts that Tacitus placed too much emphasis on the calculations of men of state. Fénélon likewise criticizes Tacitus for failure to understand the place of caprice in human conduct. By the late seventeenth century, theorists understood that events were caused by factors ranging from complex human psychology to pure chance.

After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, there were many more attacks on the theory of political absolutism:

67 Ibid., 413-14.
68 Ibid., 49-51.
Boulainvilliers, Saint-Simon, and Fenelon used their knowledge of the historical traditions of the French aristocracy to question Louis' power. Vauban and Boisguillebert both criticized Louis' economic policies. The "freethinkers" contended that all questions had to be submitted to rational analysis. La Mothe le Vayer, Saint-Evremond, and Bayle used Cartesian methods to challenge the unity of temporal and spiritual spheres in political thought. In his Critical and Historical Dictionary, Bayle used historical examples to divorce specific events from general deductive theories. By their arguments, these critics undermined the limited conceptions of divine-right theorists and political absolutists. They popularized new ways to examine political power, human conduct, and human resources.

Religious thought, also, underwent significant change by the end of the seventeenth century. For the orthodox position, we can again turn to Bossuet. Viewing the political and religious realms as an eternal unity, he argued that unquestioning religious and political obedience were necessary to maintain world harmony. The political and religious order were patriarchal and hierarchical. This harmonious and synthetic view was challenged and shaken by the writings of the Huguenots,70 and other religious

69 Sée, Idées politiques, 194 ff.
70 Erich Haase, Einführung in die Literature des Refuge (Berlin, 1959), 511.
reformers. Isaac Larrey, Michel le Vassor, Pierre Jurieu, Pierre Bayle, Basnage de Beauval popularized more analytical thought forms through their treatises on contemporary France and on religion. Specifically, they revealed the discrepancies which existed between appearance and reality in seventeenth-century France, and they distinguished between questions of belief and knowledge in religious issues. 71

The historically relevant questions of truth, certainty, and verification had been raised in the early sixteenth century by Reformation thinkers. 72 Luther, Erasmus, Castellio, and Calvin early argued about the criteria for religious knowledge. They raised the issue of skepticism, which in the seventeenth century was popularized by the writings of Bayle, Descartes, La Mothe le Vayer, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Gassendi, to name but a few. Montaigne criticized the belief in miracles and revelation; by the late seventeenth century, skepticism verged on pyrrhonism. 73 Skepticism about supernatural occurrences and religious knowledge was easily transferred to a secular realm. The development of skepticism was essential for the historian, who needed to challenge sources, question

71Ibid., 526-27.
73The development of skepticism is also related to the growth of scientific thought and scientific methods of analysis. See below, pp. 67-72.
witnesses, and evaluate materials. The changes in religious thought were highly significant for the birth of historical criticism.

Both the religious and political theory of the period ca. 1660-1720 influenced historical thinking. Insofar as divine-right theories were prevalent, they were accompanied by static and otherworldly conceptions of harmony. However, theories of *raison d’état*, political attacks on absolutism, and religious challenges to Catholicism had begun to replace the more traditional views by the end of the seventeenth century. These critics introduced skepticism, secularism, rationalism, and humanism into the consciousness of their readers.

**Literary Values**

French classical literature—essentially a social, aristocratic literature which arose to meet the needs of a politically and socially privileged class—reached its zenith during the reign of Louis *le grand*. The years 1660-1685, precisely the period of Louis' pre-eminence in Europe, are also the years when classicism flourished in France.  

In part, the explanation for this synchronization arises from the objectives of the classical author.

---


75Peyre, *Qu'est-ce que le classicisme?*, 55.
The aim of classical authors was to cater to the tastes of a socially refined and enlightened class. Classical literature was designed foremost to please. Language was the vehicle to satisfaction, but language had to be pure, clear and precise in order to be socially acceptable. The Court became the arbiter of language, and efforts to purify and formalize linguistics became more pronounced.

There was, therefore, a clear interrelationship between literary taste and political privilege.

The aim of purification did not serve the ends of the historian well. In the effort to refine the French language, all technical, bourgeois, and realistic usage was rejected for more noble and elegant terminology. Whole categories of words were eliminated, and writers were forced to create works of art with a very limited vocabulary. Greco-Roman models were used as blueprints for style, for thematic materials, and for literary forms. Literary excellence was measured by contrived and formal patterns of writing. It is easy to see that the historian would be extremely limited in the realistic depiction of historical events, if he were to write in this genre. In fact, this literary mode was employed by many narrative historians,

76 Ibid., 41-43.
77 Lough, Seventeenth Century France, 244 ff.
78 Highet, Classical Tradition, 250-53.
79 Ibid., 291.
and by all panegyrists, and had a detrimental effect on the development of historical techniques.

During the seventeenth century, the term classicism generally signified an aesthetic of art. Classical art was characterized by its equilibrium, order, lucidity, precision, simplicity, beauty, and uniformity. Classicists assumed that both beauty and reason were universal moral values. Therefore they maintained that a true work of art would be universally and eternally praised. To achieve this fame, the artist only needed to emphasize classical themes and to follow classical rules.

The aim of the classicist was to portray the heroic, the sublime, and the ideal. Because of these aims, the

---

80 According to Peyre, "classicism" has at least four definitions. It is used to refer to (1) authors used in classes or schools—that is, authors of greatest authority such as Saint-Thomas, Cicero and Caesar, (2) authors who have been judged as the best, (3) writers of antiquity, and (4) a measured art. This last definition applies to seventeenth-century classicism. See Peyre, Qu'est-ce que le classicisme, 26-29.

81 Ibid., 29; Wright, French Classicism, 21-22; Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore, 1948), 89-95.

82 Lovejoy contends that a belief in "uniformitarianism" was a preconception of intellectuals from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. He writes: "'Anything of which the intelligibility, verifiability, or actual affirmation is limited to men of a special age, race, temperament, tradition, or condition is eo ipso without truth or value, or at all events without importance to a reasonable man. The object of the effort of the religious, moral, or social reformer, as of the literary critic, is therefore to standardize men and their beliefs, their likings, their activities, and their institutions.'" (Lovejoy, History of Ideas, 80.)
classical genre cannot be identified with realism. By their use of lofty and eloquent language, and by their depiction of ideal virtues and passions, classicists were, in fact, often idealistic and sentimental. They largely wished to depict ideal types rather than to portray individual characteristics. They were, however, also interested in character and almost always focused on an individual human dilemma. On the one hand, classicists wanted to depict universal human virtues. On the other hand, in order to comprehend the human actor, they engaged in individual self-analysis, and in the realistic psychological penetration of the internal man. They tried to describe every man by analyzing the individual man and by making him into a universal type. In this way, the artist became a moralist whose aim was to instruct human society in the practice of virtue.

Literature, as well as history, was often directed toward this utilitarian end. Thus was lost the portrayal of the accidental, or the unique historical circumstance.

---

83 This point of view is held by René Bray, "L'esthétique classique," Revue des cours et conférences, 30e année (2nd series), No. 11 (May, 1929), 211, and by Wright, French Classicism, 74. Peyre, on the other hand, argues that there is a connection between classicism and a philosophy of "reason." See Qu'est-ce que le classicisme?, 81, 85, 105.

84 Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 16 (July, 1930), 683; No. 13 (June, 1929), 442; Peyre, Qu'est-ce que le classicisme?, 123-24.

85 Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 16 (July, 1930), 683; No. 12 (May, 1929), 377-78.
Historians accepted this theory as an explanation of their own purpose. By so doing, they sacrificed historical detail and the awareness of human, cultural, and temporal diversity in the process. They relied on a fixed concept of human nature, and on a static definition of morality.

While classicists operated under essentially a-historical premises, they indirectly popularized the reading and enjoyment of history. This was accomplished by their adherence to the literary rules of vraisemblance and bienséance. The rule of vraisemblance was related to the moral end of the artist. Vraisemblance, that is, the probable, is differentiated from vrai, the true. The classical author needed history, or historical pretense, so that the moral teaching inherent in the art form would be taken seriously. It was essential to avoid fantasy or improbability in their presentation. Thus, increasingly, classicists tied their subjects to historical settings and situations. This is not to suggest, however, that historical accuracy was fused to literature. Often just the opposite occurred, since history, itself, was frequently

86 For a more complete discussion of the rules of imitation and the concepts of unités and le merveilleux, see ibid., No. 11 (May, 1929), 216-24; No. 13 (June, 1929), 443-49; No. 16 (July, 1930), 673-76; Peyre, Qu'est-ce que le classicisme?, 113-21.

87 Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 12 (May, 1929), 370-72; Wiley, Formal French, 230; Wright, French Classicism, 123.

88 Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 12 (May, 1929), 375.
altered to make the situation more verisimilar. After 1660, novelists began to use trappings of historical erudition, such as elaborate prefaces and source citations, in order to appear trustworthy. Between 1650 and 1665, true historical curiosity was born; from 1665-1700 the historical or realistic novel evolved. History and the novel were fused together by such authors as Courtilz de Sandras, Boursault and Prehac. This practice finally reached its culmination with Alain René Le Sage's authorship of *Gil Blas*. Readers of the age began to read everything that was termed a *histoire* or *mémorial*, and came to develop an historical consciousness despite classical theory.

The rule of *bienséance* was related to that of *vraisemblance*. This rule required an adherence to propriety, and was sometimes translated as *jugement*, *bon sens*, or *raison*. *Bienséance*, when it referred to the internal structure of a work of art, required that an individual’s character and manners form a harmonious whole; when it


91 Dallas, *Le roman français*, 139-40.

92 See the excellent article by May, *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, LV, 156, 169, 172.

referred to the external relationship with the reader, bienséance became vraisemblance.94

In order to remain faithful to this rule of classical theory, authors relied on psychological portraiture and analysis. They tried to relate an individual's character to his own time and setting, thereby creating a realistic and creditable story. For this reason, mémoires and portraiture95 grew in popularity. In order to study the customs and manners of other countries and to paint realistic settings, the genre of the extraordinary voyage was exploited.96 Thus, despite the theoretical attempt to depict universal and static values, in order to moralize, we see that the rules of vraisemblance and bienséance forced the classicist to popularize history. In so doing, the author and the reader developed insights into human individual psychology and cultural diversity.

The classicists, however, did not hold a monopoly

94Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 13 (June, 1929), 434-35, 438.

95For a discussion on literary portraiture, see Richard W. Bates, Literary Portraiture in the Historical Narrative of the French Renaissance (New York, 1945).

96Geoffrey Atkinson has devoted two full-length works to a study of this genre. See Les relations de voyages du XVIIe siècle et l'évolution des idées (Paris, 1924), and The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature (2 vols.; New York, 1969). Of particular interest for our purposes is his assertion that the idea of progress had its early roots in this literature. See Relations de voyages, 187-88.
on literary theory, and their acceptance of an unchanging world harmony and an eternally true aesthetic was subject to heated debate during the famed Battle of the Ancients and Moderns. Both the partisans of the ancients and those of the moderns considered themselves good classicists. The point at issue, however—whether the ancients were to be venerated and emulated in toto—implicitly raised the question of historical development, change, and progress. By so doing, the classicist's world view was slowly undermined.

The debate between the ancients and moderns was not new to the classical age. Its origins can be traced as far back as the Revival of Learning in the sixteenth century. Rabelais was an early champion of the view that the ancient writings were not infallible, and both Montaigne and later Corneille felt free to criticize their tutors from the ancient world. The real impetus, however, stemmed from Descartes' challenge of the ancient authorities. Believing in the potential for the perfection of human reason, Descartes attacked all impediments to rational thinking.

97 Particularly useful works on the "battle" include Jules Delvaille, Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de progrès jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1910); Hubert Gillot, La querelle des anciens et des modernes en France (Geneva, 1963); Tilley, Decline of the Age of Louis XIV; Adam, Histoire de la littérature française, V; Hight, Classical Tradition.

98 Tilley, Decline of the Age of Louis XIV, 319-20.

99 Delvaille, Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de progrès, 203-204.
Among his devils singled out for particular attack were Aristotle—that representative of ancient sophism—and the medieval scholastics.

The position of the "ancients"—represented by such distinguished literary men as Racine, Boileau, Jean de la Fontaine, Père Rapin, and Pierre Cordemoy—was simply that artistic standards were absolute. Nowhere could better models be found than in the ancient Roman works which were models of symmetry, eloquence, and purity.100 The debate began in earnest when Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin attacked Boileau's belief in the superiority of the ancients. In 1670, Saint-Sorlin published *La comparaison de la langue et de la poésie françaises avec la langue et la poésie grecques et latines*, in which he specifically denounced such ancients as Virgil, Ovid, and Homer as inferior to the moderns. His essential argument, later adopted by both Fontenelle and Perrault, was based on a concept of development. Simply stated, he argued that the world constantly ages, and therefore progresses. The moderns, blessed with the advantages of greater maturity, would necessarily be the more rational thinkers and produce superior artistry.101

P. Nicolas Malebranche, François Charpentier, Bernard Fontenelle, Jean Le Clerc, and Saint-Evrémond all


101 Tilley, *Decline of the Age of Louis XIV*, 324-25.
joined the battle in favor of the moderns in the 1670's and 1680's. None, however, had as great an impact as Charles Perrault, author of *Siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687) and *Parallèles des anciens et des modernes* (1688-1697).

Essential to Perrault's argument was his contention that there was no such thing as absolute beauty. Forms of verse, painting, and architecture were subject to change. While constant progress in the arts and sciences was unlikely, because such circumstances as war and disease caused temporary setbacks, the general effect of time was to lead to greater and greater knowledge and ability.102 According to the moderns, the natural effect of progress enabled them to produce literary masterpieces at least on a par, if not superior, to those of the ancients.103

Saint-Evrémonde must be credited with the further realization that development and progress breeds obsolescence.

---


103 This point was eloquently argued by Fontenelle, who contended that modern man had the benefit of increased knowledge. See Delvaille, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée du progrès*, 211, 217. The moderns also argued that man could change and improve nature. This argument was related to scientific teachings. See Higeth, *Classical Tradition*, 265. The dispute was not based only on literary taste. It was related as well to the ambitions of Louis XIV. By 1670, such artists as Corneille, Molière, Pascal, LaFontaine, and Boileau challenged the supremacy of the ancients by their literary works. Louis was eager to support these literary giants so that his reign could boast artistic achievements on a level with those of the ancients. In fact, Charles Perrault read his poem, *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*, before the crown-supported Académie Française to support the Modern position. See René Bray, *Boileau: L'homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris, 1942), 109-110.
He argued, for example, that the dictates of 3,000 years past no longer seemed completely relevant:

Il n'y a personne qui ait plus d'admiration que j'en ai pour les Ouvrages des Anciens. J'admire le dessein, l'économie, l'élevation de l'esprit, l'étendue de la connaissance: mais le changement de la Religion, du Gouvernement, des Moeurs, des Manières, en a fait un si grand dans le monde, qu'il nous faut comme un nouvel Art, pour entrer dans le goût et dans le génie du Siècle [sic] où nous sommes. 104

Moreover, Saint-Evrémond pointed to the different cultural values over the ages: the Romans tended to distort truth, while "... le Génie de notre Siècle [sic] est tout opposé à cet esprit de Fables et de faux Mystères. Nous aimons les vérités déclarées ... rien ne nous contente aujourd'hui que la solidité, et la raison." 105 In short, the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns centered on the question of historical development and philosophy. The issue was thereby brought to the attention of the literate public. The battle made the French aware of their unique excellence and merit, and suggested the progress of human reason. Finally, the moderns replaced the authority of the ancients with a more flexible and historical concept of aesthetics.


Scientific Thought

The Scientific Revolution is neither distinctly French nor limited to the seventeenth century. Yet, its effect on all thought forms cannot be denied. Scientific investigations resulted in the acceptance of a heliocentric cosmography, the use of a quantitative method for analyzing cause, and the popularization of a relative system of values. By utilizing empirical and analytical thought forms, scientific thinkers prepared the way for a more objective analysis of facts in all disciplines, and for the application of a new method.

The medieval world view placed man and the earth at the center of a universe which was finite, small, and picturable. Everything was intelligible, hierarchically unified, and both created and controlled by God. By the seventeenth century, the value concepts of perfection, harmony, and otherworldliness were discarded for the empirical analysis of an infinite, mathematical, and secular universe. Copernicus, Renaissance advocate of the heliocentric theory, combined both medieval and modern thought.


107 Alexandre Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (Baltimore, 1957), 2.
patterns. He viewed the world as an enclosed, finite structure, but by placing the sun at the center of the universe, he undermined the geocentric theory. His discovery slowly shattered the medieval cosmos, and raised significant questions about the purpose and place of man in this new scheme. Perhaps even more important was that Copernicus dealt a mortal blow to authority, since by his findings he popularized mathematical and empirical thought.

Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes all championed the cause of quantitative analysis. Kepler argued that the real world was explained by mathematical relationships, and first formulated laws of motion in quantitative terms. Galileo, like wise, viewed nature as essentially mathematical and geometrical. Because of these features, Galileo asserted, nature was a simple and orderly system which could be rationally (i.e., mathematically) comprehended. Concerned with bodies in motion, he turned away from the question of "why" things move (a question of final causality) in order to analyze "how" they move. This, in turn, led him to an examination of space and time. His greatest contribution is described by Burtt in the following manner:

In place of the teleological categories into which scholasticism had analyzed change and movement, we now have these two formerly insignificant entities [space and time] given new meanings as absolute mathematical continua and raised to the rank of ultimate metaphysical notions.

108 Ibid., 29; Lovejoy, Chain of Being, 104.
109 Burtt, Foundations of Science, 83-84.
Change was no longer an act of God, but could be understood mathematically through motions.

Mathematics became even more central to Descartes, who made it the basis for his metaphysics.\textsuperscript{110} His duality of mind and matter is well-known, and its implications for philosophy have been explored. Of importance here is his mechanistic and mathematical analysis of cause. Descartes isolated the world of sensation, describing all perceptions and occurrences as a function of extension (or matter) and motion.\textsuperscript{111} Extension and motion were defined by geometrical mathematics; through this quantitative method, Descartes believed that absolute certainty could be achieved.\textsuperscript{112} With mathematical reasoning, Descartes discovered a way to analyze how things occurred—the cause of events—by using quantifiable concepts. Descartes discovered a method which made man's investigation of his world both secular and scientific.

Secular and deductive reasoning would be used profitably by historians in their treatment and analysis of materials. Cartesian thought, however, lacked any sense of historical continuity or development. Descartes flatly denied that past thought had any value. His intent was to

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 222.

\textsuperscript{111}Koyré, Closed World to Infinite Universe, 100-101.

\textsuperscript{112}W. von Leyden, "Philosophy," The Ascendancy of France, 77-78.
make a definite break with scholastic philosophy, and he refused to believe that the past could teach him anything. Thus, Descartes perceived change in a-historical terms. His contribution to historical thinking was that he proved that cause could be analyzed rationally and methodically.

The discoveries of science culminated in the synthesis of Newton. He used mathematical methods, but combined them with empirical investigation. He isolated scientific questions from teleological ends, thereby emphasizing the importance of each piece of evidence in itself. He gave new meaning to the terms space, time, and motion. Perhaps his most significant contribution for the historian was the value he placed on critical observation. The scientist, as well as the societal observer, should use empirical techniques to explain how and why things occur. Newton championed the cause of empirical methodology, which became in time the most trusted method for historians and scientists alike.

Empiricism formally became a tool for the study of man when Locke used it to explain human knowledge in his

---


114 Burtt, Foundations of Science, 19-20, 294.

115 A Frenchman, Pierre Gassend, known as Gassendi, foreshadowed Newton's concern with observation by arguing that the source of all knowledge lay in sense perceptions. See von Leyden, "Philosophy," The Ascendancy of France, 86.
Essay on Human Understanding. If man's knowledge was a result of his stored experiences, then history became essential as a record of past experiences. The study of history, in fact, could increase man's understanding by adding to his experiences. We have seen that Louis XIV recognized this value in history. Most historians, as will be shown in Chapter IV, argued in this vein. Through empiricism was born an awareness of the use and importance of history.

These advances in scientific analysis had a profound impact on traditional societal values. By quantifying all matter, scientists undermined the moral and religious values which had given men their purpose in life. By drawing a clear distinction between facts and values, scientists challenged the way in which men had analyzed their milieu. Finally, by depriving God of his immanent control of the universe, scientists suggested both that men had control of their own actions and that men could understand the world in which they functioned. To be sure, these ideas would not be accepted and digested immediately. But the impact of a secular, coherent, and quantifiable system

116 See footnote 22 above.

117 This crisis in men's consciousness is analyzed by Lucien Goldmann, The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine, trans. Philip Thody (London, 1964), 46. Goldmann also attributes this crisis to the change from a communal to an individualistic (capitalist) society. See ibid., 28.
of values affected all disciplines. In seventeenth-century France, the erudite classifications and critical explanations by paleographers, bibliographers, and chronologists, reveal the impact of order, criticism and scientific method. The narrative historian's increasing concern with causation and his secular analyses reveal the importance of scientific findings. Finally, the historian's interest in documentation, evidence, and objectivity were sparked by the empirical approach of scientific thinkers.

The factors discussed in this chapter were not exclusively responsible for the development of historical consciousness in seventeenth-century France. Indeed, there were many other factors which could be mentioned, if we were conducting an exhaustive inquiry into the reasons for this awareness. One would need to discuss the historical consciousness of sixteenth-century historians, the growth of French nationalism and patriotism, the impact of printing, the techniques of comparative historical analysis derived from Roman law, and the erudite humanist culture of the

---


120 See, especially, F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (New York, 1962), 27-31; William F. Church,
robe nobility in the French judicial system. 121

I have attempted, however, to deal only with assumptions and presuppositions of seventeenth-century Frenchmen, and to discuss the ways in which these assumptions affected the growth of historical consciousness in France. During most of the seventeenth century, the pragmatic value of history was recognized, but was accompanied by a limited concept of historical development. The raison d'être of the historian was to preserve an empirical record of man's past. Empirical evidence, however, was used to support universal moral teachings. Seventeenth-century theorists still viewed the world largely in static terms. By the end of the seventeenth century, some thinkers began to recognize that these traditional concepts were no longer relevant. It was agreed that history was important, but its precise value could not be universally determined. History lacked a defense for its unique synthesis of art and science. This lack of direction can be explained further by an examination of the previous historiography which became a model for seventeenth-century authors.


121 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, II, 964.
CHAPTER II

THE ASSIMILATION OF PAST HISTORIOGRAPHY

If seventeenth-century historians were affected by their current intellectual and political environment, they were also influenced by the historical work of the past. Of particular interest to them were the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans and the historical works of their predecessors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In large measure, these were the models which influenced their style and approach to history. To a lesser degree, historians of the period 1660-1720 looked also to the works of Renaissance historians as models of historical writing. The influence of earlier historiography will be examined in the course of this chapter.

Historians writing between 1660 and 1720 did not blindly imitate their mentors from the past. Past models of historical writing were grafted onto seventeenth-century narratives. These mutations resulted in certain inconsistencies, for between the ancient period and the sixteenth century, many new and often conflicting ideas had emerged with respect to the purpose, content and techniques of history. Seventeenth and early eighteenth-century historians
sought to assimilate these conceptions to the intellectual environment of their own time and to their own personal milieu. Only then would they be able to create a work of history appropriate to their own epoch.

In this chapter, I will describe the historical work of the ancients, of the humanists, and of the sixteenth-century historians which seem to have influenced historians of the period 1660-1720. I will also try to show the extent to which seventeenth-century authors were aware of earlier historiography. Finally, I will describe the differences which arose in the minds of seventeenth-century historians about the purpose and method of history.

**Ancient Historiography**

Commentary on history, on change, on development, and on time could be found in the works of ancient poets, moralists, historians, and philosophers. The historical works and historical attitudes of the ancients affected both the writings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century historians alike. The Hellenistic Greeks and Romans, in particular, had argued that the purpose of history was didactic and ethical. Their conception of history was revitalized by the authors of the *histoire raisonnée*.

The works of the ancients were well-known to historians of this period. All major classical histories were available in the original by the fifteenth and sixteenth
centuries, and were translated into the vernacular by the seventeenth. 1 Claude de Seyssel translated both Thucydides and Xenophon in 1520 and Rabelais worked on the translation of Herodotus. Plutarch's Parallel Lives appeared in French in 1559 through the efforts of Jacques Amyot, while Caesar, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus likewise were translated during the sixteenth century. History, in fact, became the single most important field of translation during the Renaissance. 2

While the ancients were revered by both sixteenth and seventeenth-century intellectuals, they were admired for different reasons. During the sixteenth century, the language, style, genres, and subjects of the ancients were copied. Seventeenth-century writers, however, were influenced more by the scope and subject matter of ancient histories than by the language and style of their authors. 3

It was to the Hellenistic and Roman period that historians looked for models of historical writing. During the

---


3 Bray, Revue des cours et conférences, No. 12 (May, 1929), 364-65; Wright, French Classicism, 5; Wiley, Formal French, 220-21. Wiley explains that by 1660, French language and tastes were formulated, allowing seventeenth-century classicists to integrate rather than imitate the ancients.
seventeenth century in Europe, between 160 and 280 editions appeared of works by Tacitus, Sallust, Florus, Curtius, Livy and Suetonius; for the same period, between 25 and 75 editions of the Greek masters were produced.\(^4\)

The Hellenistic Greeks and Romans speculated in depth about the purpose and end of history. They emphasized in particular history's didactic function. They did not, however, formulate this theory of history. Rather, it was during a much earlier period of Greek civilization that Polybius claimed that history provided the best education for those active in political life.\(^5\) Histories should be addressed to kings, their ministers, diplomats and officers, and should focus on the subjects relevant to them. The corollary was also presented: History could be written best by those who had been active in public life. Since history was a form of teaching by example, those who had the greatest and most relevant experience would necessarily make the best teachers.\(^6\)


\(^5\)Nadel, *History and Theory*, 1964, 294-95. Polybius was actually imitating Cicero, who stated that virtue was practical and society was its sphere of action.

\(^6\)Ibid., 295-98.
But it was mostly to Livy, Tacitus and Sallust that seventeenth-century commentators turned for inspiration. Titus-Livy was admired in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century for his eloquence. By the later seventeenth century, however, as historians became more interested in history's didactic end, Livy was praised for his political acumen and moral teachings. Like Polybius, Livy believed that history should serve an exemplar function. He was interested primarily in exposing and improving the moral standards of Roman citizens:

The subjects to which I would ask each of my readers to devote his earnest attention are these -- the life and morals of the community; the men and the qualities by which, through domestic policy and foreign war, dominion was won and extended. Then, as the standard of morality gradually lowers, let him follow the decay of the national character. . . . There is this exceptionally beneficial and fruitful advantage to be derived from the study of the past, that you see, set in the clear light of historical truth, examples of every possible type. From these you may select for yourself and your country what to imitate, and what . . . you are to avoid. 7

As the national historian of Rome, writing under the patronage of Augustus, Livy emphasized the ancient moral virtues of men, and lauded heroic acts of patriotism and sacrifice. The scope of his work was directed toward the court. Unlike Tacitus, he was not a man of practical political experience. Instead of critically evaluat-

ing concrete political acts, he emphasized civic virtues. He incorporated many of the defects of the rhetorical school into his writing, inserting speeches or harangues for their literary effect. His chief merit stems from his strong national bias; he tried to give the Romans a sense of the growth of their nation and the righteousness of their power.\(^8\) This nationalistic fervor and justification accounts for Livy's popularity in seventeenth-century France. His patriotic zeal and his moralistic tone provided forceful examples for French court historians and panegyrists. Unfortunately, Livy associated piety with patriotism, and in his narrative he often referred to the fates and gods. Most seventeenth-century historians tried to maintain a secular perspective and shied away from other-worldly explanations of historical occurrences.\(^9\)

Tacitus, himself a man who had led an active political life, was extremely popular in the seventeenth century. Like Livy, he was praised both for the political insight and moral content of his works. He was lauded for his astute analyses of court life, for his causal explanations which emphasized political intrigue and for his

\(^8\)Burke, History and Theory, 1966, 146-47.

\(^9\)See Chapter VI.
ethical perspective on history. In some ways the anti-
thesis to Livy, Tacitus painted a vivid picture of minor
details and petty intrigues, often losing sight of the
abstract and general forces at work. He analyzed specific
political motivations, but failed to show any sophisticated
understanding of causation. He remained essentially an
annalist. 10

Tacitus was often used as a model by seventeenth-
century historians. Between 1640 and 1651, Perrot d'
Ablancourt translated two volumes of the Annales, as well
as Germanie, and Histoires. In 1686, Amelot de la Houssaye,
writing essays on flattery, stated that they were structured
after Tacitus. Tacitus, it was claimed, was a master of
the secrets of political domination. Even Louis Henri
de Loménie, comte de Brienne, makes reference to Tacitus' political clairvoyance in his own Mémoires:

Il suffit de savoir que parmi le récit de ma
disgrâce, de mes exils et de mes prisons, se
rencontrent les plus beaux récits d'armes de
Louis le Grand, les motifs les plus secrets
de ses hauts desseins et les ressorts les plus
 cachés de la politique espagnole et anglaise.
Tout parle en cette histoire, et j'ai tâché que
chaque parole, à l'exemple de Tacite, renfermât
quelque mystère, en un mot que chaque période
fut pleine de quelque notable enseignement.12

11 Burke, History and Theory, 1966, 148-50;
Bury, Ancient Greek Historians, 228-32; Thuau, Raison
d'état, 33-44.
12 Thuau, ibid., 36.
Some seventeenth-century historians like Saint-Evrémond indeed recognized the limitations of Tacitus, who "...tourne toute chose en Politique: chez lui la Nature et la Fortune ont peu de part aux affaires." This criticism, more pronounced in the latter seventeenth century, led to the increasing praise of Plutarch, Suetonius, and Sallust. These men, Saint-Evrémond argued, knew how to depict the complexities of the human actor, and how to paint a portrait of psychological and natural dimensions.

Of Sallust, Saint-Evrémond writes:

...Sallust fait agir les hommes par tempérament, et croit assez oblier son Lecteur de les bien faire connoître. Toute personne extraordinaire qui se présente, est exactement dépeinte ... l'ambition, l'avarice, le luxe, la corruption, toutes les causes générales des desordres de la République, sont très-souvent alleguées ....

Sallust, at one time a politically-active supporter of Caesar, presented Roman politics in moral terms. He was praised by seventeenth-century historians because he recognized both the complexity of human motivation and man's crucial role in the drama of history. Portraying the corruption of Rome as well as the gallant deeds of


14See Chapter I, pp. 52-54.

her warriors, he sincerely tried to divorce himself from rhetoric and to portray the truth. His characters are drawn with impartiality and with spirit. Unfortunately, his character analyses are a bit too structured. As Shotwell writes: "... the qualities assigned to them seem to smack a little of formula; ... they share the element of the commonplace which makes so much of antique literature seem more or less like stage property."\(^{16}\) As we shall see, the same criticism can be lodged against the portraiture of French panegyrists.

Roman writers of the Early Empire were particularly interested in painting historical portraits of important persons of their time. Suetonius, the private secretary to Hadrian, enjoyed writing literary portraiture in the form of biography. In his \textit{Lives of the Twelve Emperors}, he describes the lineage, education, career, physical attributes, character, and demise of each of the emperors from Caesar to Domitian.\(^{17}\) Both Augustus and Tiberius wrote their own memoirs during this period in an effort to eulogize their political activities. Surreptitious memoirs in opposition to the rule of the Caesars provided both

---

\(^{16}\) Shotwell, \textit{Story of Ancient History}, 289. See also \textit{ibid.}, 286-90.

\(^{17}\) Thompson, \textit{History of Historical Writing}, I, 91.
Tacitus and Suetonius with information of court intrigues. But is really Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* which represents the culmination of the Roman interest in biography. 18

The ancients formulated many of the conceptions about the purpose and content of history which were emulated by seventeenth-century philosophers of history. Both stressed the exemplar and moral function of history, the political lessons derived therefrom, and the effect of intrigue and circumstance. In both periods, historical works were filled with portraits and with causal explanations. 19 While the views of the ancients were assimilated

---


19 There are many other Ancients, both Greek and Roman, who were cited by historians. Charles Sorel, for example, lists the ancients most worthy of study in his *La Science de l'histoire*, 26-35. René Rapin compares the assets of the works of Thucydides and Titus-Livy, bringing in many other ancients in the process. See René Rapin, *Les Comparaisons des grands hommes de l'antiquité, qui ont le plus excelle dans les belles lettres* (The Hague, 1725), 180-81, 191-200. Throughout both *histoire* and *commentaires* on history, one finds references to almost all the well-known ancients. Daniel alone cites Horace, Lucian, Tacitus, Seneca, Sallust, Juvenal, Titus-Livy, Julius Caesar, Quintilian, and Cicero in his *Histoire de France*. Cordemoy makes a plea for the genius of Herodotus. See Géraud de Cordemoy, *Observations sur l'Histoire d'Herodote,* Divers traitez de metaphysique, d'histoire, et de politique (Paris, 1691); Daniel Lombard, in his *Comparaison des deux histoires de M. de Mézeray et du Père Daniel, en deux dissertations, avec une dissertation préliminaire sur l'utilité de l'histoire* (Amsterdam, 1723), cites Lucian, Sallust, Titus-Livy, Cicero, Plutarch, Plato, Suetonius, Aristotle, and Denis d'Halicarnasse throughout the text. This list could be extended indefinitely.
by seventeenth-century historians, their work was not simply copied. Rather, seventeenth-century authors joined the conceptions of the ancients to their own theories about development and form.

Renaissance-Humanist Historiography

The birth of humanist narrative history can be traced to Italy with the appearance of Lionardi Bruni's History of Florence around 1415. Bruni followed that formula of the ancients which defined history primarily as an art form. Since language was thought to be the root of all of man's knowledge, the style and narration of a historical work became more significant than its factual detail. Yet, his work should not be dismissed on these grounds. Bruni also tried to trace the cultural importance of Florence as a city. He placed considerable emphasis on human and psychological motivations of historical actions. As a fore-runner to Machiavelli, he formulated the principle of virtù.

---

20 Evans, L'Historien Mézeray, II.

21 Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship, 21-27. In these pages, Kelley explains how this interest in artistic expression led to the development of the auxiliary sciences of grammar and philology. Fussner argues that literary and scholarly aspects of humanism were united until the late sixteenth century. See Historical Revolution, 46-47.

22 Thompson, History of Historical Writing, I, 479.
Bruni's approach was introduced into France by Paolo Emilio of Verona, historiographer to Charles VIII and Louis XII of France. After Charles' death, Louis XII commissioned Paolo Emilio to write a Latin history of France, modelled after Livy. In 1529, Paolo Emilio produced the ten book De rebus gestis francorum. This work found wide appeal for its narrative art, marked by Roman color, fictitious narrative, cadenced speeches, harangues, and linguistic grandeur. The frequent moralistic digressions give his work philosophic overtones. Emilio was primarily a moralist and literary writer rather than a historian.

Emilio's humanist descriptions were emulated by Bernard de Giraud du Haillan, historiographer to Charles IX from 1571. In his vernacular History of France, his major purpose was to compose a national and patriotic history, which would celebrate the accomplishments of France. François du Belleforest, Jean de Serres and


François Eudes de Mézeray, as well as many later seventeenth-century historians, are the inheritors of this tradition. Their philosophic interests led them to depict everything which was related to man and had moral implications. Their artistic interests stimulated them to create a lofty, classical, literary form.

Humanist historians of the Renaissance saw themselves both as moralists and literary artists. Through their writings, they aimed to instruct their readers as well as to please them. Factual accuracy was secondary to their moral purposes and therefore, examples and evidence were chosen which would depict virtuous conduct. Ancient heroes were cited as models of morality, and ancient historians were blindly imitated. By using past events and characters as models of human behavior, humanists adhered to a static view of history. Insofar as they believed that history revealed the same characteristics of men throughout time, humanists hindered the development of historical consciousness.

These ideas were presented in manuals which discussed the purpose and form of history. One of the best-known and earliest manuals was Jean Bodin's Methodus of 1566. Bodin upheld the didactic and moral purpose of history,

25 Fussner, Historical Revolution, 46.
26 Pocock, Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law, 6.
and suggested that historians emulate Roman models. His work was well-known to seventeenth-century historians.

Humanist historians also continued the Renaissance interest in personal portraiture. In the writing of biographies, memoirs, essays, and national histories, historians used the character sketch as a means of instruction. These sketches had both a pictorial and psychological value. In the works of Philippe de Commynes, Du Bellay, Pierre Matthieu, de Thou, and d'Aubigné, the portrait became a way to emphasize the human aspects of history. The human actor emerged as the predominant force in the drama of history. Seventeenth-century memorialists agreed with the Renaissance historians that the primary function of the historian was to depict man. In their own memoirs, they focused on the human motivations of conduct. They owe an obvious debt to Renaissance historians who popularized the interest in the human actor.

Sixteenth-Century Historiography

French historians of the sixteenth century critically affected the philosophy and the techniques of seventeenth-

---

27 Of particular value for a discussion of the development of portraiture is the work by Bates, Literary Portraiture in the Historical Narrative of the French Renaissance. See especially, 13-40, 140-43.
century historians. The historical work of the legists and the historical arguments of the religious reformers challenged the traditional authorities, thereby raising the historical questions of time and development. These questions were essential for the development of a historical consciousness. Moreover, the legists also developed the scientific auxiliary discipline of philology—a primary tool of the analytical historian who was interested in the critical sorting of evidence.

Legists. The legists of the sixteenth century made their greatest contributions to the historian's craft through their analyses of documentary materials. Despite the clear differences in technique, it is not possible to divorce humanist and legist historiography completely. Legists like Estienne Pasquier, Pierre Pithou, and François Baudouin were educated as humanists. Such schools emphasized the importance of language, and concentrated specifically on subjects of grammar and philology which, they claimed, were the necessary tools for detailed textual analyses. The legists, however, did not adhere to the humanist belief in unchanging moral truths, and therefore, they were better able to develop a historical and

---

relative perspective of the past.

This awareness of the past developed from their study of law. Instead of learning Roman law by the commentary method of Bartolus, French legislators wanted to study the original Roman texts. They found an able teacher in an Italian jurist, Andrea Alciato, who developed a philological method to teach textual analysis. The use of philology soon revealed that language was not static, but relative to time and culture. Likewise, legislators soon argued that law, also, was a function of custom. This developmental and historical approach to law formed the basis for a school of lawyers under the direction of Jacques Cujas. He assimilated and expanded the techniques of Lorenzo Valla and Guillaume Budé, who had devoted their energies to the study of both philology and lexicography.

The erudite interests of the legislators were further reflected through their collections of documentary evidence and compilations of historical material. Jean du Tillet, legislator, archivist, and antiquarian, was commissioned by

---

29 Huppert, ibid., 152-53. Church makes an important distinction between students of French and Roman law. See Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France, 4-5, 73, 84, 120, 202-03.

30 Pocock, Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law, 8-19; Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship, 91-98.

31 Kelley, ibid., 112-15.

32 See, especially, ibid., 26-46, 56-80 for discussion of Valla and Budé.
Francis II to re-organize the French royal archives. He made the archival materials available through his Collection of the Kings of France, in which he collected such medieval sources as trésor des chartes, registres de Parlement, and chambre des comptes.33 Pierre Pithou, Vignier, and Pierre de Bourdeilles Brantôme likewise contributed to historical criticism through their compilations of materials.34 The monastics of the seventeenth-century owe an irreparable debt to these legists, who initiated the tasks of collection and collation of historical data.

While there are many legist historians worthy of study, including Michel de l'Hôpital, Pierre Pithou, and François Baudouin, the person who best presents the legist approach to the writing of history is Estienne Pasquier. As a member of the Cujas school, Pasquier used legal documents in an effort to show the development of national institutions. Applying philological techniques to archival sources, he studied the internal evolution of French society. His basic argument was that laws and language reveal constant mutations. They are both a function of custom and of history, which is itself continually changing. In the

33Ibid., 215-32.

34For Pithou, see ibid., 249-64. For Vignier, see Huppert, Idea of Perfect History, 119-33; For Brantôme, see Fueter, L'histoire de L'historiographie moderne, 189.
Recherches, Pasquier's intense nationalism is conspicuous. This patriotism, however, is based not on a moral commitment to French grandeur but on a historical analysis of the French past.\(^{35}\)

The erudition of the legists was combined with a sophisticated awareness of historical relativity. Legists critically analyzed historical materials through philological techniques. These techniques enabled them to see diversities in language, law, and cultures throughout time. Moreover, legists were largely uninterested in questions of causation. They made little effort to connect the narrative of history to show general trends. This failure was partially met by seventeenth-century narrative historians.

**Religious writers.**—Many Reformation and Counter-Reformation disputes centered on historical questions. The major issue of the Reformation revolved about the role of the Church, and consequently, the significance of tradition. Both traditionalists and reformers were forced to use historical techniques and proofs to defend their positions. The *Magdeburg Centuries*, compiled by Lutherans, was refuted

by Caesar Baronius' *Annals* in 1588. In turn, Isaac Causabon, a Protestant, responded to Baronius with his *Exercitationes*, a work which used philological techniques to expose mistranslations and chronological errors. Likewise, the canon law was scrutinized for evidence of the origins of religion and was re-examined in historical terms.  

The French Religious Wars in the middle and late sixteenth century were also responsible for the production of masses of historical documents. The passion of their arguments resulted in the rapid proliferation and popularization of memoirs, chronicles, national histories, and universal histories. Even more significant than the numbers of works produced was the historical consciousness revealed in these works. Sixteenth-century Huguenots, specifically, developed a constitutional argument founded on historical fact. Francis Hotman, in the *Franco-Gallia* of 1573 used historical evidence to claim that absolute monarchy had no historical foundation. History proved, to the contrary, that the King was limited by the power of the Estates-General and that his office was elective. By focusing on the issue of historical traditions, reformation historians contributed to the development of historical consciousness in France.


37 Thompson, *ibid.*, I, 553-54.

The Awareness of Past Scholarship

The historical works of ancients, Renaissance humanists, and sixteenth century writers were known to seventeenth-century historians, who both commented upon and utilized the earlier works. Polybius, Herodotus, Tacitus, Sallust, Titus-Livy, Julius Caesar, and Plutarch were the subjects of frequent reference by seventeenth-century authors. Bodin's *Methodus* was used as a guide by authors in France, England and Holland. Following in Bodin's footsteps, the French historians Le Moyne, Bossuet, Lenglet Dufresnoy, and Saint-Real all defended the pedagogical value of history, arguing that history should provide examples of vice and virtue. Commynes, the early Renaissance memoirist, is cited by both Père Gabriel Daniel and Isaac de Larrey in footnotes of their works. Mézeray, in his *Histoire de France*, continues the humanist tradition of Paolo Emilio. His work is filled with beautiful engravings, medals, portraits, and quatrain descriptions. He is indifferent to

39 Nadel, in "Philosophy of History before Historicism," states that the work of the Dutchman Gerard Johann Vos, *The Art of History* (1623), and Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1738) were inspired by and modelled on Bodin. (History and Theory, 1964, 306.) Fussner claims that Degory Wheare and Hobbes were also influenced by Bodin's moral conception of history. See Historical Revolution, 165-70.

the question of historical truth, and glides over embarrassing detail. The text has both dramatic and narrative features, but shows little knowledge of historical development. His purpose is to please and to instruct. \[41\]

The serious scholarship of sixteenth-century legists and erudites was also valued by seventeenth-century authors. Pasquier's *Recherches* went through six reprintings in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Serious scholars, like Du Chesne, Jacques and Théodore Godefroy, and Mabillon continued the work of compiling sources and published the works of Vignier, Pasquier, Pithou, and Denis Godefroy. \[42\]

The availability of ancient and sixteenth century sources can be demonstrated both through an examination of seventeenth-century libraries and seventeenth-century historical texts. Most private libraries of the period did not contain very diversified collections. However, between 1665 and 1702, Parisian private libraries contained over fifteen copies of Aristotle, Cicero, Herodotus, Horace, Ovid, Pliny, Plutarch, Seneca, Tacitus, Livy and Virgil. \[43\]


\[42\] Huppert, *Idea of Perfect History*, 175-77.

These works often appear in footnote references by authors of the *histoire raisonnée*. In addition, one can find frequent references to Polybius, Lucian, Sallust, Julius Caesar, Thucydides, Suetonius and Petronius.\(^{44}\)

Both Renaissance and sixteenth-century materials were also available in sufficient quantity so that interested scholars in Paris could consult these materials. Between the years 1642 and 1670, fifteen or more copies existed in private libraries of works of Paolo Emilio, Du Tillet, Du Haillon, De Thou, Dupleix, Monstrelet, Sainte-Marthe, Coeffeteau, Guicciardini, Bodin, and Mézeray. Thirty or more copies existed of works by Belleforest, Pasquier, Serres, and Davity.\(^{45}\)

Particularly diversified was the library of Saint-Simon. Works on history included such general sources as Du Chesne's *Scriptores historiae Francorum*, works of Mézeray, Matthieu, Aubery and Daniel. For the reign of Louis XIV, Saint-Simon had the opportunity to utilize the rimed gazettes of France and Holland, the Mémoires of de Retz, the history of Larrey, the letters of Madame de Sévigné, mazarinades, diplomatic collections, the dictionnaires of Moreri and Bayle, topographies, and

\(^{44}\) These references are scattered throughout the works of Lenglet Dufresnoy, La Mothe le Vayer, Charles Sorel, Gabriel Daniel, Simon de Riencourt, and Saint-Evrémond. See above; footnote 19.

genealogies. In addition, he had recourse to such unprinted sources as the Mémoires de Mademoiselle, The Journal du cardinal de Richelieu and the secret papers of Torcy.46

Most seventeenth-century authors did not have such a choice. They relied primarily on printed books or journals. As we have seen, they often referred to ancient and sixteenth-century sources. They also made frequent use of printed materials of their own century. It was not an easy matter to combine these materials from such different periods. Seventeenth-century theorists and historians could not agree on which views were most relevant to their own time.

Inconsistencies and Disagreements

The historians of this period did not simply copy the attitudes and approaches of their mentors. The concepts of history expressed by the ancients and the various schools of sixteenth-century historians were not consistent with one another. This caused a certain amount of confusion amongst readers and writers. Moreover, seventeenth-century thinkers were also affected by the values of their own epoch, so that the historiographical theories of previous ages often required adjustment. This change in

46 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, xxxiv-lvii.
values from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century is described by Peter Burke as "... a shift from virtue to prudence, from eloquence to truth". In other words, historians of the period 1660-1720 valued practical wisdom more than moral integrity; this explains the popularity of Tacitus. Likewise, with a formal language already established, they were more concerned with fact than with expression; this explains the decline of Livy.

One of the major differences between ancient and sixteenth-century historians related to the question of historical development. Since ancient historians posited that the primary purpose of history was to provide examples of universal moral truths for the benefit of every man, they obviously did not recognize the effect of change on the human situation. To them, virtue and morality were static concepts; similarly, man would always display the same character and motivations, regardless of his environment. If the ancients superimposed any philosophy of history onto these essentially immutable truths, it was a cyclical view of change. Civilizations passed through stages of growth, maturity and decay before they came back to their initial starting position. If change did occur, there was no essential development involved.

Legists of the sixteenth century, and the early seventeenth century, however, brought to history the concept of relativity and development. Arguing that all cultures and periods were dissimilar, they claimed that history portrayed the unique experiences of each age. The reader could thereby learn of the complexity of the human condition. Through the customs, laws, and religion of a nation, the reader could follow the march of history and could thereby begin to understand the development of man. Each culture, however, was different, and therefore the men of these cultures were also distinct from one another.

Which of these two conflicting views were seventeenth-century historians to follow? Many of the panegyrists of the reign of Louis XIV adhered to the ancient conception of history as a static portrayal of morality and virtue. This view eminently suited their own needs. Louis XIV emerged as the personification of virtue for all times and all cultures. He could be compared readily with past political figures of different cultures, since he was always depicted in terms of his courage, his grace, his soul and his virtue. Such attributes of kingship were timeless. Jean de la Serre, Michel-David Bizardière, François Faure, Abbé de Vertron, La Mothe le Noble, and Mirat de la Tour all adhered to the view
that morality and virtue were a-historical and a-cultural concepts.

However, some historians of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries began to apply legist assumptions to their historical narratives. Not all of them, of course, understood the implications of the assumptions equally. Historians like Henri Philippe de Limiers, Gabriel Daniel, Charles Auguste de La Fare, and Paul Pellisson referred in their writings to the need to understand the specific cultural determinants of human response. Other theorists and historians, like Henri de Boulanvilliers, Bernard de Fontenelle, Lenglet Dufresnoy, and Abbé DuBos recognized that cultural differences with regard to laws, customs, religions and governments indeed affected the more theoretical question of historical relativism. Each society had its own customs which were related to the unique historical circumstances of the period. Change was continuous and was revealed in the march of history. Thus, on this important component of historical consciousness, seventeenth-century historians did not agree.

Equally significant for the development of historical consciousness was the issue of truth. Was truth defined in moral or existential terms? Was truth equivalent with fact, or was truth an abstract judgment? For the ancient historian, truth was a normative concept which revealed a
higher reality. For the sixteenth-century legisl, truth was composed of facts which were to be discovered through ardent historical research. At some point, the two conceptions were inconsistent with one another. For if a specific fact conflicted with a general truth, one or the other had to give way.

In the seventeenth century, this issue provoked a varied response. In defining truth, some historians, like Menestrier and Le Moyne, had an ethical, moral norm in mind. Therefore, Menestrier could consistently state that truth was the essence of history and at the same time classify poetry, novels and fables as types of history. Others, like La Mothe le Vayer or Isaac de Larrey, seem to define truth as the strict adherence to factual reality. Still others like Daniel use the term truth to imply the adherence to fact, but at the same time, stress the equal value of literary eloquence in the presentation of historical materials.48 One cannot help but wonder whether...

48 See Menestrier, Les divers caracteres, 31, 43-44, 56-57. On p. 116, Menestrier writes: "'Pourvu qu'ils aient dit vrai en racontant le passé, c'est assez pour être Historiens....'" However, in describing the histoire poétique, he states: "'L'Histoire Poétique est celle qui est accompagnée de fictions ou qui représente la vie d'un homme, et ses actions sous des voiles et des symboles.'" (Ibid., 56.) Compare, also, Daniel, Histoire de France, I, xxvii, lvii, lxxiii; Larrey, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xx, xxix; La Motte le Noble, Histoire panégyrique de Louis XIV, roy de France, sous le nom de héros incomparable (Rouen, 1673), Avis.
he considered it legitimate for the historian to neglect the "truth" when it was in his literary interest to do so. It was only the non-narrative historians of the seventeenth century who clearly perceived historical truth in twentieth-century terms. Erudits like Montfaucon and Mabillon worked unceasingly to clarify the specific details of history. There were no truths to expose other than the facts. These facts were presented in largely annalistic form so that no misinterpretations could develop. It was the unadorned facts of history which comprised truth. In short, there was no general agreement amongst historians of this period on the definition of truth.

A third critical question which arose in part as a result of the diverse historical models was that of the form of an historical work. While ancient historians rarely spoke about the style of their works, they were emulated by humanists and classicists alike precisely for their eloquence and their form. Renaissance histories also were utilized as manuals of historical style by some literary historians. The legists of the sixteenth century, however, were unconcerned about the need for a pleasing and socially acceptable form to clothe their findings.

Amongst seventeenth-century historians, we again find a broad spectrum of views on this issue. Pierre Le
Moyne, René Rapin, and Courtiz de Sandras quite clearly believed that the historian would not be able to teach anything if he did not amuse his readers. The style of the work was the means to please. The historian, they argued, should employ sentences, maxims, and harangues in the appropriate ways, and should adopt a noble and eloquent style. These theorists continually referred to ancient writers as the models of stylistic excellence. They modelled their own works after Titus-Livy, Suetonius, Plutarch and Caesar. On the other hand, the monastics—dedicated to the accurate exposition and explication of historical detail, obviously had no interest in the dictates of stylistic experts. For the érudits, writing involved a simple and objective portrayal of historical detail. Style, in the terms of the humanists or classicists, merely adversely affected the exposition of facts.

Similar disagreement existed with regard to the subject matter of history. For the ancients, the information to be included in a work of history should be carefully selected so as to uphold the general ethical and political principles of the author. Since Roman historians also composed literary portraits, they tended to include more detail about man's life and circumstances than their moral purpose would necessitate. Even amongst ancient historians, then, inconsistencies emerged. This disparity
was maintained by Renaissance historians as well, who viewed themselves both as moralists and as portrait artists. By the sixteenth century, however, a shift in values had occurred. The legists, interested in tracing the growth and development of a specific culture, were more attuned to the unique factors that would account for cultural diversities than to general principles. To them, history was the record of all that had occurred in the past.

Historians of the period 1666-1720 often mouthed one or another of these theories, but their narratives do not necessarily adhere to their theories. For example, Charles Sorel, Simon de Riencourt, and Menestrier agreed that history was the record of all past events, and should read as a mirror of the past. But their abridged and eulogistic treatment of seventeenth-century kings in fact denies the sincerity of their words. Henri Philippe de Limiers, Gabriel Daniel, Le Ragois, and the writers of the dictionary of the Académie Française thought that history should record only "memorable events". This, of

course, required further definition. Were memorable events those which ennobled virtuous deeds, or those which demonstrated a political argument? Were the historians to follow Roman writers, who saw history as a school for morality, or Reformation writers, who used history to support a political principle? Some, like La Motte le Noble and Bizardière, discuss Louis XIV as the personification of virtue. Others, like Limiers and Boulainvilliers, seek to use history to support their own political perspectives. In short, the decision rested with the individual historian.

Thus we can see that seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century historians differed amongst themselves about the nature and composition of history. By no means was there general agreement about the primary elements of history, or even consistency of argument by the same historian. The seventeenth century was a time of assimilation and integration for the historian. He often mouthed the phrases which he found in models of past history. Frequently, one historian used words like truth, fact, and sincerity with a slightly different interpretation than had his mentors. This arose from the need to integrate these past materials to his own milieu. As we shall see, different schools of historians of the period 1660-1720 followed either ancient/humanist conceptions of history or legist techniques. Where the sixteenth century had been
able to unite the two in a philosophy of "legal humanism", the seventeenth century created two distinct historical schools.
CHAPTER III

THE SPECTRUM OF HISTORICAL INTERESTS

During the period 1660-1720, more works were published by French authors on history than on any other subject, with the exception of religion.\(^1\) History was clearly a subject which interested both authors and readers alike. In addition to the numbers of works produced, what is particularly striking is the heterogeneous nature of this literature. Undertaken by authors with dissimilar abilities and goals, historical literature of this period reveals a great diversity of interests, techniques, and scholarship.

The historical literature of the years 1660-1720 can be divided into three basic types, reflecting three distinct theories of history. These three "schools" designed histories which I have characterized as scientific, philosophic, or artistic. Lacking a well-defined conception

\(^1\)No exact figures exist with regard to book production. However, Pottinger's statistics on 600 authors writing between 1500 and 1791 can be cited as proof of the popularity of history. Between the period 1650-1730, his sample shows that 446 works of theology were produced and 309 works of history. This can be compared with 182 works of poetry, 123 works on philology, 52 works on medicine, 11 works on political science, and 3 works on education. See French Book Trade, 30-31.
of their function as intellectuals, historians experimented in many genres of historical writing. The literature which they authored was fertile with new intellectual substance.

Students of historiography have failed to recognize that each of these three types of history had its own value. Commentators have tended to emphasize one or the other of these types as representative of the historiography of the period, without adequately portraying the diversity which is the more significant characteristic. Some critics, for example, have lauded the work of seventeenth-century monastic antiquarians as the first truly critical, and scholarly historical work. It is in this genre, they argue, that objective, analytical techniques were formulated which aided the development of history as a scientific discipline. In flagrant contrast to these sober and reasoned efforts, they continue, is the narrative work of *hommes de lettres*, marked by its blatant disregard for fact or truth. ²

Other commentators have ignored the work of antiquarians, and focus instead on the literary aspects of the historical writing. They claim that most of the literate men in the society regarded history merely as an appendage to literature. They point to the fact that the word "histoire" was used for plays, poems, novels, and political tracts. Contending that no clear distinction was drawn

between history and romance, they point to such spokesmen as La Fontaine, who link the genres of history and literature.  

There is of course some justification for these arguments. One need only compare Bernard de Montfaucon's *Monumens de la monarchie francoise* with Charles Perrault's *Le siècle de Louis le grand* to recognize the more balanced and scientific approach of monastic scholarship. And in support of the contention that history was a *species* and literature its *genus*, one can turn to the Dictionary of the Académie Française (1694) for verification. This esteemed dictionary cites at least two revealing definitions of history. It is, first, a "... narration des choses dignes de mémoire," and second, a "... récit de toute sorte d'aventure particulière"; both definitions fail to exalt fact and truth, thereby linking history with literature more than with science.  

French political authorities, too, associated history with literature. Until the eve of the French Revolution, *belles-lettres* and *histoire* formed one classification of the censor. But despite the obvious

---


justification for these two conceptions of history, historians have been superficial in their analysis of the historical work of this period.

Specifically, they have failed to recognize and to emphasize that many seventeenth-century historians saw themselves as philosophers and moralists more than as fact-finders or literary men. The fact that historical writings are frequently marked by philosophic digressions from a historical narrative has generally been ignored. That history provided the empirical evidence for moral philosophy has not been adequately stressed.

For these historians who saw themselves as moralists, their function was to study civilizations, customs, and men. From this study, they would be able to reflect and comment upon the value of political-social institutions and the virtues of particular men. It was not only the historian's prerogative to offer this commentary, they claimed, but his duty. The historian acted as a teacher, presenting evidence, and analyzing the import of these details for his student. From history, one could learn about the roots of his nation and culture, and one could also learn of the effect of virtue and vice in politics. More than a literary artist

ministres pendant les trois derniers siècles de la monarchie (Paris, 1912), 191.


or a scientist, the historian was a moral spokesman for his country.  

All three types of history described above were written during the period 1660-1720. Some work was clearly critical and scientific in purpose. Some "histories" were designed purely as artistic, subjective creations. Between these two extremes falls what I have called the histoire raisonnée. This type of history often combined scientific pretense with formal artistic excellence. At the same time, the historian exercised his moral calling by interjecting within the text advice to his readers. Assimilating the models of the past discussed above, and adjusting them to the needs of their own era and milieu, historians produced essentially three types of history. These three genres--scientific history, the histoire raisonnée, and artistic history--will be examined in the following pages. I hope thereby to place the histoire raisonnée in the proper perspective of seventeenth-century historical work.

Scientific History

The legists of the sixteenth-century approached the

---

8This philosophic interest is distinct from both scientific and artistic elements of historical writing, although they can readily exist together in the same work. All three elements bear some relation to an author's conception of the purpose and value of history. The philosophic and moral concerns, however, when expressed, make of history a reflective subject. The scientific and artistic elements of a given historical work implicitly define history as an objective and empirical discipline or as a literary and creative one.
documentary materials of history as a scientist approaches his empirical data. They collected as much evidence as possible, they compiled their materials into coherent categories, and they carefully sifted fact from fiction. For the latter task, they utilized their knowledge of geography, chronology, genealogy, numismatics, and philology. These efforts were continued by seventeenth-century erudits and antiquarians. Both religious and political documents were collected with avid interest in order to authenticate the origins, foundations and formation of institutions. Truth and falsehood were established by methodical principles of textual analysis.

This "scientific" pursuit became so highly regarded that many writers who lacked both training and patience compiled their own collections of historical evidence. Some of the compilations which appeared to represent critical scholarship were nothing but shabby potpourris of documents which were neither authentic nor relevant. Yet, the mere fact that so many of these compilations were produced indicates the prestige of "scientific" history during this period.

The most impressive work of this nature was undertaken in religious houses by both Jesuit and Benedictine scholars. Many of the collections published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represent the joint efforts of scores of scholars over a period of time ranging from
twenty to 120 years. The historical scholarship of the Jesuits, for example, was initiated by Jacques Sirmond. From 1609-1612, he published a three-volume history of the councils of the medieval Church. By 1671-1672, this was expanded into a new eighteen-volume edition by Philippe Labbe and others. Labbe alone was responsible for the publication of the first eight volumes of this work.

Philippe Labbe worked prodigiously on both political and religious compilations of materials. In 1638, he proposed the composition of a vast chronology of sacred and profane history. He is credited with the writing of Greek and Latin grammars, Byzantine history, royal genealogy, royal heraldry, and secular French history. All of his works, from the joint authorship of the eighteen-volume Sacrosanta Concilia to his more popular Abrégé Chronologique and Histoire des Roys reveal his efforts to treat history as a science. Labbe believed that chronology was the key to scientific history. In all his works, the

9 The precise name of the work is Concilia Generalia. See Thompson, History of Historical Writing, II, 32.

10 The exact title of the work on church councils is the Sacrosanta Concilia ad regiam editionem exacta, cum duobus apparatibus. Other works undertaken by Labbe include the Bibliotheca bibliothecarum (1664), L'Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire sacrée et profane (1666), Concordia chronologica technica et historica (1670). For other titles see Michaud, Biographie Universelle, XXII, 256-58.

chronology of events is more important than the narrative. Labbe was one of the earliest Jesuits to devote his life to the crusade for historical accuracy.

The Bollandists, a group of Jesuits based in Antwerp, were dedicated to the collection and publication of original sources pertaining to the lives of the saints. From 1629, John Bolland and Henskens analyzed the transcripts and

In discussing the Jesuits, mention should be made of Hyacinthe Robillard d'Avrigny, the author of Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire universelle de l'Europe depuis 1600 jusqu'en 1716. Avec des réflexions et remarques critiques (1725) and of Mémoires chronologiques et dogmatiques, pour servir à l'histoire ecclesiastique, depuis 1600 jusqu'en 1716 avec des réflexions et des remarques critiques (1720). D'Avrigny entered the Jesuits in 1691 and died unknown in 1719. His writings were revised by other Jesuits who deserve some of the credit for them. Of particular interest is the four-volume work, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire universelle de l'Europe depuis 1600 jusqu'en 1716. The text begins with a five page general view of the state of Europe. From there, he follows a strict chronological order by year in which he discusses conflicting dates or minor details which have been contested. He spends almost no time analyzing conflicting interpretations or evaluations. Neither is he interested in questions of objectivity. The importance of the work stems from the fact that the author recognizes the difficulty of determining factual accuracy, and is aware of the need to critically evaluate the sources of history. He is not interested in why events have occurred, but merely wants to verify historical data. He explains his purpose in these words: "... mon dessein n'est pas seulement de ramasser des faits et des dates, ce qui ne demande que de la lecture; mais de les examiner, de les discuter ... de marquer la variété qui se trouve dans nos Ecrivains, ce qu'il y a de certain, de douteux, ou de faux dans les différentes Relations. ... à mettre les Lecteurs en état de juger de l'exactitude des Historiens qui ont travaillé depuis d'un siecle." (Ibid. / [Paris, 1731], ii-iii.) D'Avrigny clearly stressed the scientific aspects of the historian's trade. He does the same thing with his Mémoires chronologiques et dogmatiques, but since this work deals with religious questions, he is less objective, and more concerned with issues than dates and events.
manuscripts left by Herbert Rosweyde, who had founded the project on hagiography. The work which resulted, the *Acta Sanctorum*, applied the auxiliary sciences of history to religious belief. The Bollandists used chronology, calendars, and linguistics to determine forgeries of documents and to establish the authenticity of saints. Included in the multi-volume work were treatises on historical method and criticism, in which the genuineness of documents and charters were questioned. Examples of forgeries or questionable documents cited by the Bollandists ignited angry disputes with both the Carmelites and Benedictines. The Bollandists may not have been completely accurate in each instance, as Mabillon was to prove, but they seriously inaugurated historical criticism in the seventeenth century.  

The Benedictines of St-Maur came into existence in the seventeenth century as a product of the Counter-Reformation. They dedicated themselves early to the restoration of Benedictine scholarship. Dom Luc d'Achery was chosen to answer the Bollandist charge that the charters of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Denis were forgeries. For an assistant, he chose the brilliant Jean Mabillon, who spent six years writing his masterpiece, *De Re Diplomatica*.

---

In this work, published in 1681, Mabillon analyzed charters, seals, signatures, dating, style, and language. By using the techniques of paleography, orthography, sphragistics and linguistics to determine the authenticity of documents, he became the founder of scientific diplomatics. The results of his precise and detailed scholarship offered concrete proof for his statement that truth "... est cachée, elle est environnée de mensonges et d'erreurs, surtout dans les faits de l'histoire et de l'histoire ancienne ...". This work reappeared in 1709 with additions in the latter parts and an appendix by Dom Ruinart. A Supplement was also published in 1702.

Mabillon also initiated work on the Annales ordinis S. Benedicti, a narrative of monastic history. In each volume, Mabillon added a long introduction giving a survey of the period and its characteristics. While this work is mostly a dry collection of documents, without any historical analysis, Mabillon rendered acts, charters, and documents useful for history.

The work of the Maurists was continued in the early

---


eighteenth century by the erudite Montfaucon. In 1708, he published *Palaeographica Graeca*, in which he examined over 11,000 manuscripts and analyzed Greek paleography. In his fifteen-volume *Antiquité Expliquée* (1719-1724), Montfaucon surveyed ancient civilizations and their remains. He was interested in "... tout ce qui regarde les usages de la vie, tout ce que l'homme a inventé tant pour la nécessité que pour la commodité et pour le plaisir." This, he continued, necessitated a study of their clothing, homes, money, measurements, national symbols, coiffures, jewelry, etc. The author was interested in all the concrete manifestations of civilizations, which provided "... histoires muettes ..." of the ancients.

In his unfinished *Monuments de la monarchie française* (1729-1733), Montfaucon tried to continue this cultural approach to history by examining the artistic and social life of early France. The scope of his interest seems to necessitate the form of a narrative history; Montfaucon assures us, however, that he will be controlled by his historical materials. He explicitly condemns the genre of the *histoire raisonnée*:

*Ma principale attention est de rapporter les faits exactement et simplement comme ils sont dans les premiers Auteurs. J'y mèle quelquefois des*

---

reflexions courtes ... . J'ai tâché d'éviter les défauts où sont tombéz quelques Historiens de ce bas temps; qui ont souvent orné leur narration aux dépens de la vérité, qui par des additions ou fausses ou de pure invention, par des transitions hazardées, des caractères et des intrigues dont ils n'ont aucun garans, défigurent ... l'Histoire ... 18

The erudite historian, Montfaucon argued, was primarily a technician, collecting and presenting the historical evidence of the past for its own sake. The interests of the present should have no part in the depiction of the past.

The Maurists played a significant role in the development of the auxiliary sciences of diplomatics, paleography, and chronology. Both Mabillon and Montfaucon looked upon history as a science. Evidence was synonymous with history. This scientific analysis of historical evidence was emulated, but not duplicated, by many compilers of religious and secular materials. 19

18 Bernard de Montfaucon, Monumens de la monarchie française (5 vols.; Paris, 1729), I, Preface, iii-iv.

19 There are many other examples one could cite of the work of the Maurists, such as the Gallia Christiania, and L'art de verifier les dates. Likewise, the historians of other religious orders deserve some attention. For example, the Jansenists of Port-Royal were engaged primarily in theology and philosophy. However, Le Nain de Tillémont of this order was an eminent historian, writing Histoire des empereurs et des autres princes qui ont régne durant les six premiers siècles de l'Eglise, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles, and Vie de Saint-Louis. The Histoire is a very impersonal work, using narrative fragments of ancient historians to insure his own impartiality. He was not as exact in his choice of sources as was Mabillon. See Füeter, L'histoire de l'historiographie moderne, 389-91; Thompson, History of Historical Writing, II, 27. Many histories of religious orders appeared from 1660. Louis de S. Thérèse's Annales des carmes
During the period 1660-1720, many historical collections appeared of a secular nature. One of the most interesting examples of this "scientific" approach was composed by a French general, Pierre Surirey de Saint-Rémy. His Mémoires d'artillerie, which appeared in 1697, is a dictionary of warfare from its origins to the eighteenth century. He divided his work in four sections dealing with officers, cannons, military weapons, and strategic lessons. The text includes many illustrations of military weapons spanning diverse periods of history. His work is a compilation rather than a history, and shows a critical attention to military detail. The work of Saint-Rémy was no doubt inspired by the magnificently illustrated work of military topography by Sebastian de Pontault Beaulieu. His Les Glorieuses Conquêtes de Louis le Grand first appeared in 1676.

illustrations of jewelry, and chronological and genealogical tables, to determine the origins and customs of the French nation. The work is a disunified collection of documentary evidence. Its significance lies not in the importance of the documents, but in the conscious recognition of the distinction between fact and interpretation.

The work of Etienne Baluze closely resembles the level of scholarship attained by monastics. Baluze was the librarian to both LeTellier and Colbert until 1700, and a professor of canon law at the Collège de France from 1670-1713. His most valuable work, the two-volume *Capitularia regum Francorum* (1677), is a history and collection of the ordinances of early medieval law. In this same *érudit* tradition is *Les vies des papes d'Avignon*, published in 1693.

Many other such "scientific" histories were produced, which were neither impartial nor necessarily accurate. For example, Voeurden's *Journal historique* (1684) is a chronological compilation by date, from January 1 to December 31, of the memorable events in universal history, as well as those in the reign of Louis XIV. Its purpose was to eulogize Louis, while appearing to present a non-narrative collation of universal history. Likewise, the three-volume *Annales* of Henri Philippe de Limiers (1724) presents extensive genealogical charts, and maps of the three races of France. He follows a strictly chronological approach, from Pharamond to Louis XIV, which leaves little opportunity for digression
or moral commentary. Volumes II and III encompass a history of French genealogy and numismatics. Despite the apparent complexity of the work, the Annales have been judged inaccurate and superficial. The encyclopedic approach to French history is well-illustrated by Henri de Boulainvilliers' *Etat de la France* (1727). Assigned the task of abridging the forty-two volumes of information submitted to the Crown by intendants, Boulainvilliers extracted or added materials on the customs, industry, finances, agriculture, commerce, universities, and judicial system of each of the French provinces. He constructed a history of French institutions by province. This work was organized as a scientific compilation of materials. However, Boulainvillier's own political perspective enters with sufficient frequency to raise doubts about the "scientific" validity of this work.

Pierre Bayle, while not specifically a historian, was one of the most astute historical critics of the seventeenth century. Utilizing Descartes' method of rational doubt, Bayle scrutinized all historical information with the eye of a confirmed skeptic. Not only did he attack all superstition and intolerance, but he relentlessly exposed all errors of historical scholarship which came to his attention. The *Dictionnaire historique et critique* was

---

dedicated to correcting the similar work of Louis Moréri. For this reason, his entries concern primarily authors and individuals. He traced the life, accomplishments, character, and contributions of these individuals. The dictionary stands as an important example of the interest in the verification of facts. By revealing discrepancies in detail, by portraying subjective judgments of authors, and by analyzing sources, Bayle emphasized the scientific aspects of history. Likewise in his *Critique générale de l'histoire de Calvinisme de M. Maimbourg*, and in the literary review, *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, Bayle shows his fascination with historical detail and fact.  

It would be impossible to discuss scientific history of this period without giving some attention to the auxiliary disciplines. These disciplines developed alongside of history, and often received their impetus from historians. The connection between history and these related sciences is clearly stated by Lenglet Dufresnoy:

> Il faut se conduire dans l'étude de l'histoire, comme dans celle des autres sciences ... Les sciences qui servent de fondement à l'étude de l'histoire sont la GEOGRAPHIE, la connaissance des MOEURS ET DES COUTUMES, et la CHRONOLOGIE.

Lenglet Dufresnoy committed himself to the study of all of

---


these disciplines. He wrote not only the *Méthode pour étudier l'histoire*, but also composed the *Tablettes chronologique de l'histoire universelle*, and *Méthode pour étudier la géographie*.

Many "curieux"—antiquarians by hobby—who were interested in the documents of the past turned increasingly to archaeology. Louis XIV had an impressive collection of old coins and maps, and the Royal Library contained a "cabinet des médailles." Charles Dufresne, seigneur Du Cange, the famous Byzantine scholar, the founder of medieval Latin philology, and the editor of medieval texts, also wrote works on antiquities, geography, language, and genealogy. Paul Pezron composed the *Antiquité des temps rétablie et défendue* in 1687 and the *Antiquez de la nation et de la langue des Celtes* in 1703. The integral relationship between geography and history was developed in works of Jacques La Force, Pierre Martin de la Martinière, Charles Dufresne, seigneur Du Cange, the famous Byzantine scholar, the founder of medieval Latin philology, and the editor of medieval texts, also wrote works on antiquities, geography, language, and genealogy. Paul Pezron composed the *Antiquité des temps rétablie et défendue* in 1687 and the *Antiquez de la nation et de la langue des Celtes* in 1703. The integral relationship between geography and history was developed in works of Jacques La Force, Pierre Martin de la Martinière,

---

23 See Edelman, *Attitudes of Seventeenth-Century France*, 68-71. Edelman refers to the "cabinets des curiosités" which were popular during this period. In them, one could find geological, botanical and zoological evidence, in addition to coins, arms, medals, and manuscripts.

24 Ibid., 69.

and Louis Dufour Abbé de Longuere.

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the scientific spirit had indeed influenced the writing of history. The advantages were obvious: the objective presentation of historical fact became an end in itself. The critical collection of facts would expose the "truth"—not ethical or normative truth, but existential and actual truth. However, the scientists of history neglected to develop other crucial aspects of historical consciousness. They showed little interest in cause: their aim was simply to establish what happened rather than to analyze how it occurred. Content to establish isolated details, they ignored the interrelationships of events and the philosophy of history.

Histoire Raisonnée

The histoire raisonnée describes a type of history in which scientific, artistic, and moralistic interests were synthesized. The author was concerned with both the evidence and form of history because each was a necessary element in the construction of a historical work. If the author's primary purpose was to moralize or to present a point of view, both the evidence which was collected and the form which was adopted helped to convince the reader of the justification of the author's argument. If there was no moral intent, but merely a description of historical events, the evidence contributed to the importance of the
description, while the form contributed to its readability. Many historians of the period 1660-1720 wrote works in which they tried to combine the use of historically valid evidence with a pleasing form to serve a didactic purpose.

In the effort to create a unique discipline of history, fusing scientific, artistic, and moralistic elements, authors of the *histoire raisonnée* questioned the traditional narrow framework of previous historians. Through their own work, they expanded the scope of history, treating such matters as the customs, geography, and institutions of a nation. They also investigated the cause and development of events with greater complexity and sophistication. Since their final purpose was often to teach by example, many of these authors presented a philosophy of history within their narrative. The *histoire raisonnée* was a type of history which excelled in no one element, but which synthesized previously separate historical concerns.

In this genre, for example, are works by Boulainville, Louis le Gendre, Antoine Varillas, Isaac Larrey, and many others. Louis le Gendre made a sincere effort to write a convincing cultural history of France in the *Moeurs et coutumes des français dans les differens tems de la monarchie*. In this work, he relied on the erudite materials collected by Pasquier, du Tillet, Baluze, and Du Cange. His own work, though, is quite obviously not of the same caliber. Likewise, his *Histoire de France* gives the
appearance of a scholarly narration, but the textual analyses are weak in comparison to those in "scientific" histories.

The Histoire militaire du règne de Louis XIV, by Charles Sevin, marquis de Quincy, is a good example of the multiple interests of an author writing in this genre. The work appears to be highly detailed and objective. Its organization is chronological; the dates of campaigns, negotiations, and battles appear in the margins of the work. Maps, charts, and lists are scattered throughout. Yet, there are also artistic illustrations of army generals, which serve as vignettes and add an artistic flavor. Quincy is interested primarily in military questions, but refers in passing to such domestic events as the King's majority, the death of Mazarin, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Hardouin de Beaumont de Pérefixe, Michel Le Vassor, Antoine Varillas all utilized this genre for narrative histories of individual reigns. Isaac de Larrey, Henri Philippe de Limiers, Louis le Gendre, and Louis Rouvroy de Saint-Simon use the form of the histoire raisonnée specifically to present the reign of Louis XIV. They cite primary and secondary sources frequently as evidence of their historical erudition. In varying degrees, the narrative they employ contains quotations, digressions, and speeches to engage the attention and enjoyment of the reader. The
purpose of their works is to support a political philosophy as well as to present the history of the reign.

After 1730, the *histoire raisonnée* evolved into a narrative history in which form, matter, and moral were merged with greater subtlety so as to appear both more scholarly and more philosophic. In this eighteenth-century version of the *histoire raisonnée*, for example, figure Abbe DuBos' *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française*, Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV*, and *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*, and Montesquieu's *Considerations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains*. These eighteenth-century giants of historical writing inherited many of their techniques from seventeenth-century authors of the *histoire raisonnée*.

It was not only in formal narrative histories that the genre of the *histoire raisonnée* emerged. The same historical conceptions of authors were contained in some memoirs, panegyrics, political pamphlets, and journals. Authors of this literature often composed *histoires raisonnées* under the titles of *Mémoires*, *panegyriques*, etc. In the following pages, I will show the similarities between these other genres and the moralistic history of the period 1660-1720. That the same form of composition was used by authors of works other than formal narrative history could not help but add to the popularity of the *histoire raisonnée*.
Memoirs.—The memorialist, engaged in the task of writing the remembrances of his life, is not generally considered a historian. The differences have been emphasized more than the similarities. It is argued that the scope of the memorialist is limited to personal details, and his purpose to egoistic self-justification, while the historian impersonally relates a historical situation of general interest. Many memoirs are written merely to amuse or to divert the reader, or to leave a record for family interest, while a history is written with an exemplary or didactic motivation. The memorialist often writes without any audience in mind, follows no general form, relates specific intrigues rather than general history, while the historian writes for a general public, has specific limitations of form, and tries to present a coherent general description of a historical situation.²⁶

Yet, these distinctions cannot be maintained between the seventeenth-century memorialist, and the author of the histoire raisonnée. The author of the histoire raisonnée did not function within the same limitations as later historians. The genre of the memoir provided him with many ideas which were applied to his own history. This was not, it should be added, a phenomenon new to the seventeenth century: the genre of the memoir was intimately related

to the writing of national history in France for centuries.

This mixed genre began with Gregory of Tours, and was given its more modern impetus by the Mémoires of Commynes. During the sixteenth century wars of religion, memoirs became a popular form of expression. Then, in the early seventeenth century, during the Thirty Years War, the rule of Richelieu, and the Fronde, memoirs became a well-known type of historical work. Memorialists of the seventeenth century included such prominent political figures as Richelieu, de Retz, de Brienne, Gourville, La Rochefoucauld, Pomponne, Villars, and Montglat. By relating their own personal recollections, these men were also writing political and military history.

The mémoire and histoire raisonné have certain traits in common. The authors of both were concerned with the individual, his most secret instincts, and the motivations for his actions. Neither were particularly interested in the sterile depiction of the external details of history which served no moral or political purpose. By imposing their own views on their narrative, authors of both genres implicitly related the customs of their era. Both forms were often subjective, reflected the prejudices of the author, contained portraiture of important political figures,

27Fueter, L'histoire de l'hiistoriographie moderne, 181.

28Adam, Histoire de la litterature francaise, IV, 121-22.
and instructed as well as diverted the reader.

This is not to suggest that the form of all memoirs was the same as that of the *histoire raisonnée*. Some seventeenth-century memoirs are more useful as sources than as models because of their narrow scope, their lack of organization, coherence, and methodology. This is true, for example, of the works of Claude Forbin, François de Montglat, Louis Hector de Villars, and Henri de Turenne, which are limited to a detailed description of military history. Likewise, the memoirs of Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, Antoine Arnauld, and Henri Campion are too egocentric to provide general models for the historian; they lack an historical context.29

---

29 Even though we cannot use the *Mémoires* of Campion to examine the history of Louis XIV, we must call attention to his awareness of the distinction between the genres of *mémoires* and *histoire*. His own work, he claimed, was designed solely as a personal outlet. He writes: "Le déplaisir que j'ai ressenti de ne pouvoir être instruit des principales actions de mes ancêtres, sur lesquelles j'aurais pu, dans ma jeunesse régler mes moeurs et ma conduite, m'engage à donner aujourd'hui à mes enfans cette satisfaction que j'ai souhaitée inutilement. Si mon dessein étoit d'écrire pour le public, je choisirois un sujet plus intéressant que celui de ma vie; mais comme ce n'est que pour ma famille et mes amis, je crois que je ne puis rien faire de plus agréable pour eux, et de plus commode pour moi, que de leur raconter naïvement les divers événemens qui me sont arrivés, en y joignant, pour leur en rendre la lecture plus intéressante et plus profitable, les choses dont j'ai été témoin, tant par rapport aux affaires publiques qu'à celles des particuliers, et qui me sembleront dignes de mémoire." (Henri de Campion, *Mémoires de Henri de Campion contenant des faits inconnus sur partie du règne de Louis XII et les onze premières années de celui de Louis XIV, notamment beaucoup d'anecdotes intéressantes sur les ducs de Vendôme et de Beaufort et le cardinal Mazarini*, depuis 1643 jusqu'en 1654 /Paris, 1807/, 1-2. See also *ibid.*, 317.)
However, the memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy deal with such nationally important events as the reorganization of the government under Louis XIV, and the operation of the conseils. He is well-known for his analytical portraits of political figures. The Mémoires of Jean Heraud de Gourville, Louis François de Sourches, and Antoine de Gramont, are written with an objective, balanced tone combined with moral commentary reminiscent of the seventeenth-century narrative history. The memoirs of Brienne le jeune, Louis Rouvroy de Saint-Simon, and Charles Auguste de la Fare were undoubtedly written as semi-formal histories. They reveal a concern for documentation, an awareness of the philosophy of history, an interest in the customs and culture of their day, and an effort to analyze the personal motivations of political conduct. These memorialists can indeed be considered as seventeenth-century historians as a result of the characteristics of their works. We can conclude, then, that some memoirs of the period followed the form of the histoire raisonnée.

Panegyrics.—Similaries also exist between the panegyric and the histoire raisonnée. Panegyrics of the reign of Louis XIV related many of the same events as the history of the same period. Authors of both forms of composition sought to convince their readers of the truth of their work. Likewise, both authors envisioned themselves in part as artists, responsible for the creation of an
aesthetic form to clothe the bare facts of history. The panegyrist, however, generally used a distinct form of artistic expression which closely followed the dictates of classicism. He chose a noble, elevated style, which often limited his portrayal of a character to a contrived model of the universal hero. He described only those events which depicted the sublime and heroic traits of man. He used the rules of vraisemblance and le merveilleux to heighten the dramatic effect. The panegyrist, therefore, could never be as analytical as was the memorialist or the author of the histoire raisonnée. However, the works of panegyrists serve to heighten some of the characteristics of seventeenth-century history.

This is particularly true, for example, of François de Callières' Panegyric historique. In this relatively short work, Callières divides the reign into domestic and foreign events, and covers each with fairly accurate, though superficial, detail. He attempts to deal with the reign topically and truthfully. Yet, his evaluation of the King and of his reign had been predetermined, and the facts merely served to support the author's judgment. When details were included which might cast a negative light on Louis' grandeur, the author rationalized away these failings. Despite the apparent interest in objectivity, Callières used history for his own political purposes.

Likewise, La Mothe le Noble, in his Histoire
panegyric, and René Richard, in his Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, rejected a chronological organization of history for a topical treatment. This makes their works appear analytical, but in fact, both are simple apologists of the reign. The work of Richard is a curious mixture of the old and the new. Louis is compared to Roman heroes without regard for the obvious differences in historical situations. Richard ardently believed in the imminent power and control of Divine Providence, and explained the causation of historical events in these terms. At the same time, however, his work is topically organized, emphasizing the institutions of French history. These latter characteristics suggest that Richard might have foreseen some of the future historiographical developments. As historiographe de France, however, his position was no different from that of Voltaire's under Louis XV, who saw himself as:

... the King's fool at the age of fifty ... I run from Paris to Versailles, and I make verses in the post-chaise. It is necessary to praise the King highly, the Dauphine prettily, the royal family gentle, please the whole court—and not displease the town.30

The panegyrist, usually commissioned by the King, was obviously not free to discuss the history of the period as he saw it.

Most of the panegyrics of the reign, such as

Matthieu Perrot's *Panégyrique de Louis le Grand*, Caisse's *Le triomphe de la gloire*, Mirat de la Tour's *Discours historique de règne de Louis le Grand*, Puget de La Serre's *Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième*, and Pierre Louvet's *La France dans sa splendeur* are more limited in their historiographical significance than those discussed above. They follow the form of the *histoire raisonnée* insofar as they receive "... divers ornemens de l'esprit et de l'adresse des Historiens ... ." The authors sometimes examine the motives of their subjects, but in a superficial and contrived manner, in an attempt merely to eulogize rather than to analyze. The language used is usually classical in its purity and tone, thereby severely limiting concrete and lively historical descriptions. The panegyrics, while a type of *histoire raisonnée*, are also a form of artistic endeavor. As royally supported models of history, these superficial eulogies restrained the development of a historical consciousness in France.

Political literature.—There were many other forms of the *histoire raisonnée*, including political pamphlets, satires, diplomatic manuals, and journals. Most of the authors writing in these genres focused on a historical subject, reflected upon the morality or immorality of the events, and analyzed the motivations of the actors. Amongst

---

political pamphlets and satires, one can include, for example, Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, Courtiltz de Sandras' *La conduite de la France* and *L'histoire des promesses illusoires*, Lisola's *Le Justine moderne*, and the anonymous *L'esprit de la France*, and *Histoire de la decadence de la France*. Many of these pamphlets are not merely attempts to denigrate, but are systematic criticisms of political philosophy. The seventeenth-century historian often absorbed some of these ideas into his own work. In the genre of diplomatic manuals, many of the authors combined diplomatic advice with historical example. Yves de Saint-Priest's *Histoire des traités de paix et autres négociations du XVIIe siècle*, François de Callières' *De la maniere de negocier avec les souverains*, Abraham van Wicquefort's *Memoirs touchant les ambassadeurs et les ministeres publics* are written with a consciousness of historical example.

Journals.—Seventeenth-century journals, like memoirs, can be viewed either as sources of information for the historian or as models of a narrative historical form. Some commentators have even suggested that seventeenth-century historians plagiarized heavily from the political journals. The writer's investigation of the periodical literature.

---

32 This point of view is expressed in many of the biographical inserts of Michaud in *Biographie Universelle*, and by Bourgeois and André in *Les sources*. 
literature, however, has not borne out this contention. In fact, many of the best known French journals, like the Gazette de France, or Pierre de touche politique, and foreign journals, including the Gazette d'Amsterdam, Gazette de Rotterdam, Nouveau journal universel, Gazette de Leyde, Lettres sur les matières du temps, and L'esprit des cours de l'Europe, were printed as "fact sheets," ranging from four to eight pages per copy. Following the form of a newspaper, and organized chronologically and geographically, these journals might well have provided the historian with details of dates and events. However, since the writers merely presented "facts" without comment or analysis, and since these weekly or bi-monthly sheets offered no coherent overview, it is difficult to see how seventeenth-century authors of the histoire raisonnée could have plagiarized from these materials.  

33 The works by Hatin, Bibliographie historique et critique de la presse périodique française and Les gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine au XVII et XVIII siècles are an invaluable help for studying seventeenth-century periodical literature. These two works have provided the necessary background information to these journals--particularly such technical information as names of authors, dates that the journals appeared, and changes in name of a given journal. It is very possible that monthly or yearly supplements were more useful to historians than the weekly fact sheets which were published. Théophraste Renaudot, the founder of the Gazette de France, published monthly supplements under the title of Relations des nouvelles du monde reçues dans tout le mois, and from 1634, the Extraordinaires. These supplements included the publication of official documents, and the narration of events not previously related. Even these, however, were very specific. The weekly
fact sheets were extremely dry, generally following the same format. Each week included news from Warsaw, Danzig, Vienna, Hambourg, Madrid, Rome, London, Versailles and Paris.

The journal, La pierre de touche politique (1688-1709) appeared irregularly at first, and monthly from 1690. Its author, Eustache le Noble, adopts the form of a fable. Later pasquinades, appearing under the titles Les travaux d'Hercule (1693-1694), L'esprit d'Esophe (Sept.-Dec. 1694), and Nouveaux entretiens politiques (1702-1709), contain much useful history.

There were also numerous foreign gazettes appearing in France. There was no publication called the Gazette de Hollande. This, rather, was a name which referred to all materials originating in the United Provinces. The Gazette d'Amsterdam appeared between the years 1663 and 1676. Until 1672, it appeared weekly, and subsequently bi-weekly. Frequent supplements were produced. Like the Gazette de France, it is divided into four-sheet publications, with dispatches from Rome, Venice, London, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and often from Paris, The Hague, and Madrid. The Gazette de Rotterdam, published from 1694-1716, first appeared weekly, and then alternated with the Journal historique. Regular supplements were published. On the whole, the organization is similar to that of other gazettes. The authors occasionally question the use of statistics and figures which seem to be exaggerated. Extracts of treaties or documents are periodically inserted. The Nouveau journal universel, published from 1688-1792 by the librarian and historian Claude Jourdan, appeared under the names Gazette d'Amsterdam (1690-1691), Recueil des nouvelles du Gazette d'Amsterdam (1691-1693), Avec privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande et de Westfrise (1693-1703), Amsterdam. Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande et de Westfrise (1703-1792). For several years, this periodical was published by J. T. Dubreuil until his death in 1721. Henri Philippe de Limiers wrote his eulogy in the Dutch edition of the Journal des Savants of December, 1721. He states: "'Comme il avait l'art de dire la vérité d'une manière dont chaque parti était également satisfait, on le lisait partout avec plaisir, et l'on était surpris de trouver ... toute la délicatesse des pensées et toute la force des expressions de l'ouvrage le plus médité. Surtout les Récapitulations qu'il publiait chaque année ... il rappelait d'une manière claire et concise tout ce que l'année avait de plus important ... .'' (Hatim, Bibliographie historique, 88.) Curiously, this journal followed the form of the other gazettes, appearing in four-page sheets weekly or semi-weekly. News is reported from Italy, France, Germany, Holland, Spain, England, and sometimes also from Poland, Denmark, and Persia. The news is reported largely without comment, occasionally including some
format from narrative history.

Some journals did exist, however, which could have served as models of style and technique for the seventeenth-century historian. One of the earliest journals of this type is the *Mercure françois*, published yearly from 1605-1648 under the successive direction of Jean Richer, Estienne Richer, Theophraste Renaudot, and Claude Malingre. The scope is limited mostly to military history, although each year begins with a short summary statement on the achievements of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. Some meager attention is given to a discussion of the motivations and effects of political conduct. Frequent use is made of documentary documentation in the form of a letter or edict. The supplement, called *Nouvelles extraordinaires*, was published in half-sheets, and calls attention to surprising events. In view of the organization of both the *Journal* and its supplements, it is difficult to understand Limiers' comment. If Recapitulations by year were published, they no longer seem to exist.

Another foreign publication, the *Gazette de Leyde*, appeared from 1680-1814, and was also called *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits* until 1798. The years prior to 1712 are very remote; the form is similar to that of other gazettes discussed above. *Lettres sur les matières du temps* was published in Amsterdam from 1688-1690. The author, J. T. Dubreuil (the same author lauded by Limiers), used the form of a letter of correspondence. The tone is anti-French, or anti-absolutism. He focuses mainly on religious affairs in France, and inserts documents to emphasize his point of view. The author clearly presents his view of the world situation around him, but is too personal to have been a source of plagiarism for historians. *L'esprit des cours de l'Europe* was divided by month, and by European courts. Although the author includes some documentary evidence which might have been useful for the historian, there is little serious history and little coherence to the work. See, especially, Hatin, *Bibliographie historique*, 3-8, 54, 85-88; Hatin, *Les gazettes de Hollande*, 157.
evidence such as letters and manifestoes. This journal follows a rigid chronological organization, but the narrative nonetheless remains unified.

A foreign journal, *Mercure Hollandois*, published from 1672-1684 in Amsterdam, follows the form of a history even more closely. The author begins the work with a preface, in which his Dutch bias is immediately apparent. Throughout the text of very detailed information, the author makes frequent reference to letters, harangues, and ordinances which would interest the reader as primary evidence; periodically, he illustrates the text with drawings of fortifications or individuals. While the narrative style is chronologically coherent, there are no transitions; this gives the work the flavor of a subjective annal in narrative form. The author does not limit his scope to France and Holland, but describes the affairs of Rome, England, and the Empire as well. In his treatment of cause, the author refers with frequency to Divine assistance. However, he also appreciates the political and military effect of strong power alignments. Considering the state of Europe in 1674, for example, he writes:

Les Provinces Unies ayant soutenu une tres-grande guerre tant par Mer que par terre depuis l'espace de 2. années, commencèrent un peu à respirer; et quoique qu'au commencement tout l'avantage fut du côté des Ennemis, neantmoins la chance se tourna peu à peu; Car la puissance de la France ayant paru trop grande dans les Cours des autres Princes; cela produisit non seulement une Alliance entre sa Maj. Imp. la Courronne d'Espagne, et Mess. les Etat.
Gen. mais aussi une jonction de leurs armées, ce qui causa un tel changement, dans les affaires des Français, qu'ils furent obligés d'abandonner plusieurs de leurs Conquêtes.34

Clearly this author viewed the work of a journalist as similar to that of the historian.

His contemporaries, the authors of Lettres historiques (1692-1728), similarly viewed themselves as historians. After general comments and reflections on the problems of historical objectivity, the work is divided into a series of lengthy letters. Each letter focuses upon a single country, analyzing its internal concerns and problems. Many documents are included, along with the author's reflections, and discussions of the historical background.35 Since this

34 Le Mercure Hollandois (Amsterdam), 1674, 2.

35 There is an extremely revealing quote explaining the impossibility of complete objectivity, which deserves to be cited in full: "Je déclare que je suis Hollandois par inclination et par devoir, si je ne le suis pas par la naissance. La prospérité de la Hollande fait le plus ardent de tous mes souhaits, et si elle ne peut arriver qu'au préjudice de ses Ennemis, je souhaite leur abaissement de tout mon cœur .... J'ai une Rédigion, et cette Rédigion est la Protestante. Aucune considération ne m'obligerait d'en trahir la cause. Si vous voulez donc savoir en quoi je fais consister le désintéressement, le voici en peu de mots. 1. À parler avec respect de toutes les Puissances de la Terre amies et ennemies. 2. À ne diminuer jamais ni leur puissance, ni leurs avantages, et à ne leur attribuer que des desseins qu'elles aient fait paraître clairement, ou si on leur en impute d'autres, qu'ils soient tels qu'ils ne fassent aucun tort à la probité et à la justice. ... 4. À voir une certaine équité naturelle, qui sache discerner le mérite et le louer par tout où il se trouve. Enfin, par rapport à la Rédigion, à parler avec respect de toutes celles dont on ne fait pas profession .... " (Lettres Historiques, contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe; et les réflexions nécessaires sur ce
work was the result of joint authorship, the quality is not consistent throughout; the text varies from serious, balanced, objective history to gossip and intrigue about famous persons. At its best, we find this fairly complex analysis of French achievements in January, 1692:

On peut alléguer quatre raisons principales de tout cela. La première est, que la France avoit de grosses Armées sur pié lorsque la guerre a commencé. Elle a été prête d'agir ... pendant que les Alliez étoient occupez à lever des Troupes .... La seconde raison, c'est que la France a eu la commodité et le soin de faire de grands Magazins sur toutes les Frontières de ses Etats, ce qui lui a fourni les moyens de se mettre en campagne beaucoup plutôt que les Alliez, de ravager leur Pays, d'exiger de grosses contributions de leur Peuples, et d'exécuter des desseins important .... Joignez à cela, que la France obissant à un seul Chef, ses délibérations en font beaucoup plus promptes, que celles des Alliez, qui dépendent de plusieurs Chefs différents ....

La troisième raison ... est la guerre que l'Empereur est obligé de soutenir contre le Turc, qui occupe une partie de ses Troupes, et qui donne par ce moyen beaucoup d'avantages à la France du côté d'Allemagne ....

Enfin, les affaires d'Irlande ausquelles il a fallu que le Roi d'Angleterre remédiât avant toutes choses, ont beaucoup aidé à la France à se maintenir.36

Few formal histories written during this period could boast of such a complex understanding of causation. This type of analysis clearly provided the historian with a fine example of historical description. Indeed, parts of this journal

sujet /The Hague/, 1692, 8-10.) Hatin indicates that the authors of this periodical were Jacques Bernard, Beauval de Basnage and Jean du Mont. See Hatin, Les gazettes de Hollande, 180.

36 Lettres historiques, January, 1692, 16-18.
provided models worthy of emulation by authors of the
histoire raisonnée.

The historians of the later years of Louis' reign
could also look to La clef du cabinet des princes de
l'Europe, written by Claude Jourdan from 1704-1716.37 This
journal, published monthly, was divided into articles on
Spain and Portugal, France, Italy, Switzerland, Poland,
Great Britain, Germany, and Holland. Documentary materials
included letters, manifestoes, and declarations. It is
distinguished particularly by its impartiality, and the
balanced judgments which accompany the narrative.

Perhaps the best-known French journal of the
seventeenth century was the Mercure galant, or Mercure de
France, published from 1672 by Donneau de Vizé and Thomas
Corneille, and after 1710 by Charles Rivière Dufresny and
Hardouin le Fèvre de Fontenay.38 The Mercure galant was
mostly a potpourri of political details, poems, dialogues,
fantasies, fashions, accounts of military sieges, etc.
Following the seventeenth-century theory that all the
literary arts were united, the Mercure galant incongruously

---

37 For the years 1707-1716, the journal was called
Journal historique sur les matières du temps. It was pub­
lished in Luxembourg. See Hatin, Bibliographie historique,
55.

38 See Etienne Deville, Index du Mercure de France:
1672-1832 (Paris, 1910), ix-xi. The form of the Mercure de
France changed from 1711-1714 when Dufresny divided the
volumes into four parts: Literature, Amusements, Pièces
fugitives, Nouvelles. The forty-four volumes published in
this form are considered by Hatin to be the best of the
collection.
combined politics, history, and literature in its pages without regard for structural unity. There is little in the regular editions of the journal which was valuable for the historian of the period.

Of importance, however, for our study of historiography is the supplement to this journal, *Affaires du temps* (1688-1692). This reads like a panegyric history of the reign. The author is well-aware of the limitations of newsletters, which "... n'entrent dans rien, n'apprennent rien, et tout ce qu'on en peut dire, c'est qu'elles sont sincères et sages, et que l'ordre des événeemens y est bien marqué selon leur date." One sees nothing, the author continues, "... de ce qui a pu causer tout ces mouvemens; on n'y voit point l'intérieur des grands Acteurs ... ." To satisfy these more analytical interests, one must write history.

In the supplement which follows the form of a "... corps historique ... ," the author vows to portray "... enchaînement entre tout ce qui se passe depuis la Paix de Nimègue ... ." Unfortunately, despite the author's theoretical commitment to historical analysis, he presents a highly

---

39 Another supplement, the *Extraordinaire du Mercure*, was published from 1678-1687. Sections appeared monthly, and were divided into individual letters dealing with events neglected in the pages of the journal. No summary of historical materials is involved.

40 *Mercure galant*, "Affaires du Tems" (October, 1688), 7-11.

41 *Ibid.* (October, 1688, 2nd partie), *Au Lecteur.*
biased and naive view of European affairs, euologizing Louis at every possible opportunity. Nonetheless, his clear interest in human motivations, and in the causes of events must have helped to stimulate the thoughts of historians in these directions.

Many journalists writing between the years 1660 and 1720 approached historical data in the same manner as did the authors of the *histoire raisonné*. This is hardly surprising, since they were writing at the same time, and from the same perspective. Both ornamented the text with their own reflections, and both were interested in examining the causes of events and motivations of men. The journalist, however, usually limited his scope to a narrowly confined area and time period. Therefore, he was unable to delve meaningfully into questions of causation. The journalist worked in the genre of the *histoire raisonné*, but the historian had little opportunity to plagiarize directly from his work.

The *histoire raisonné* was a form of historical writing with its own unique structure and its own moral view of the purpose of history. These two elements differentiated the *histoire raisonné* from other historical work of the seventeenth century. The structure facilitated the maintenance of both erudite and artistic pretenses. Insofar as memoirs, panegyrics, and pamphlets were constructed with this form, they must be classified as part of the genre.
In addition, authors using this form had a political, moral, or personal end in mind. History was exploited to elucidate this purpose. The opportunity to examine the motives of human behavior and to impose one's own personality on the material helped to emphasize the purpose of the author. When the memorialist, panegyrist, journalist, and pamphleteer used history in a similar manner, their works fall within the scope of *histoires raisonnées*.

**Artistic History**

As realism and empiricism grew more popular during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, writers turned increasingly to history as an aid to help them create a sense of reality in their works. These poets, novelists, and satirists had no interest in historical fact or truth. As classicists, of course, they adhered strictly to the rule of *vraisemblance*, and earnestly endeavored to make their works credible. To this end, these artists often used precise historical detail in parts of their work. This precision, however, was rarely sustained, because the main purpose of the author was artistic rather than historical. No effort was made to uphold scientific pretenses; on the contrary, many of these "historians" used the form of a novel or of poetry to present their historical materials.

It is often difficult to distinguish where the genre of the *histoire raisonnée* ends, and that of the novel begins.
Two authors in particular, Roger de Bussy-Rabutin and Courtilz de Sandras, mixed literary and historical genres with such skill that it becomes impossible to separate them. Courtilz de Sandras wrote as a historian, pamphleteer, social satirist, memorialist, and novelist. His works range from semi-serious history, such as his Mémoirs contenant divers événements remarquables arrivés sous le règne de Louis le Grand, to scandalous attacks on Louis XIV in Les Conquêtes amoureuses du grand Alcandre, and to apocryphal memoirs such as the Mémoires de Mr. L.C.D.R. In this latter work, we can see the mixtures of genres most clearly. M. L.C.D.R. is a fictitious character, who recounts his adventures and his impressions of men, some of which are accurate and some blatantly falsified. He was strongly influenced by the Mémoires du Sieur de Pontis, from which he borrowed many details and techniques. However, Courtilz de Sandras did not maintain Pontis' naive adherence to divine-right philosophy, and aimed instead to reveal the disparity between a dignified exterior and the internal character of divinely-chosen leaders. In the process, we see a satirical tableau of seventeenth-century customs, through which the author is seeking to give us a lesson in social morality. In a series of works published between 1684 and 1686, including Conquêtes amoureuses du grand Alcandre dans les Pays-Bas, Intrigues amoureuses de la cour de France, Les dames dans leur Naturel, and Conquêtes du
marquis de Grana dans les Pays-Bas, Courtilz recounts social scandals of the reign. His major purpose is to portray the human instincts and base passions of the King. At the same time as he is functioning as historian and satirist, Courtilz is implicitly attacking the literary philosophy of classicism.

Equally representative of the mixture of genres is the work Remarques sur le gouvernement du royaume durant les regnes de Henry IV, de Louys XIII, et de Louys XIV. Courtilz de Sandras did not write a unified history, but commented on various aspects of the reigns of these three Bourbon kings. The section on Louis XIV, for example, spans 100 pages which are divided into four chapters. The author portrays the government of Mazarin, the inclinations of the King for war, for mistresses, for religion and for grandeur, and the life and moeurs of both Condé and Turenne. In some parts, the reader is exposed to the historical events of the reign, as when Courtilz de Sandras describes the magnificence of the historical monuments erected by Louis. At the same time, however, the text is scattered with satiric verse and epigrams, thereby changing the tone

42Tilley, Decline of the Age of Louis XIV, 161-62; Woodbridge, Gaten de Courtilz, sieur du Verger, 24, 45-47, 77.

43Gaten de Courtilz de Sandras, Remarques sur le gouvernement du royaume durant les regnes de Henry IV, de Louys XIII, et de Louys XIV (Cologne, 1688), 128.
of the work from historical probity to artistic and satirical levity.

The works of Roger de Bussy-Rabutin are written in the same tradition of those of Courtilz de Sandras. Bussy-Rabutin is known for his epistolary art, his classical style, his political satire, and his role as founder of the roman satirique. This genre of the roman satirique necessitated the blending of history, satire, politics, and fiction. The purpose was to amuse and divert the reader by portraying accurately some aspects of contemporary society and by inventing others. Bussy-Rabutin succeeded in combining these varied disciplines, while at the same time maintaining an elegance, lucidity, and purity of style.  

The Histoire du Palais Royal, written in 1666, exemplifies these talents. The work is not a traditional history, but rather a story of the King's excessive and impassioned love for Louise de la Vallière. The author has occasion to mention attachments also with Marie Mancini, Mme. de Montauzier, Mme. de Soissons, Mme. de Navailles, Mme. de Crequy, and Mme. de Soubizes. Louis appears very childish in his passions. Historical verity is evoked through the extensive use of fabricated discourse and letters. The author describes in great detail Louis' melancholy when la Vallière turns to the companionship of

other women. Likewise, he refers to the Queen's sadness as a result of Louis' inconstancy. In short, by focusing on Louis XIV and his mistresses, Bussy-Rabutin is treating an aspect of the history of moeurs of the reign. As well, he is writing a satirical story which will amuse his readers.

In seventeenth-century literature, there are a number of "historical" works written in verse which deserve mention here. Of particular interest is a twenty-three page poetic chronology of the kings of France, written by P. de Coursons. In his preface, he states his debt to Paolo-Emilio, whose method he has followed. He has written in verse, he maintains, because the historical detail is easier to retain if it is rhymed. He will include the names of the kings, their significant campaigns, their victories and defeats, their portraits, their moral and political virtues and faults. After this initial lure, how disappointing to find a very limited panegyric description of Louis XIV, comparing him to Mars, the god of war. A more serious effort at combining history and poetic verse is Godard Le Berigny's Abrégé de l'histoire de France, en vers. Of similar design are poems by Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin,

45 P. de Coursons, Méthode nouvelle et tres-facile pour apprendre l'histoire de France et l'histoire romaine, depuis Romulus jusques aux Empereurs (Paris, 1700), Avis, Aiii.

46 Ibid., 9.
Regnier Desmarais, Charles Perrault, Michel de Marolles, and Jacques de Saint-Garde Carel. The significance of this form arises purely from the fact that historical realism had become a popular tool of the man of letters. History was exploited to suit the needs of literature. In this type of historical work, it is unquestionable that history was an appendage to literature. The only criteria of value were literary ones—an emphasis on vraisemblance, the evocation of pleasure, the use of a classical, elevated style precluded any interest in objectivity or source and character analysis. Nonetheless, this literature served to popularize history. From this, it derives its significance for historiography.

In the foregoing chapters, three major types of historical literature have been described. We have seen


There are many individual works which do not readily fit within this threefold classification, but which also attest to the interest in history. One should at least mention the works of Alexandre and Nicolas Campion, brothers of the memorialist Henri; the former wrote Recueil de lettres qui pourraient servir à l'histoire (1630's) and Entretiens sur divers sujets d'histoire, de politique et de morale (published posthumously in 1704), respectively. Pellisson's Histoire de l'Académie Française (Paris, 1701)
that a broad spectrum of diverse interests existed amongst historians. Some dedicated themselves to a lifetime of objectification and quantification of materials. Some merely used history for the imagery of art. A class of historians, midway between the two extremes, sought to utilize the findings of the erudits without sacrificing the excellence of form. After examining the characteristics and the differences of these schools of thought, we are led to the question: Are there any similarities amongst the historical works produced during the years 1660-1720?

Similarities appear throughout the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century in the content of the works of history. The vast majority of histories written during this period dealt with France. Personal histories of kings both past and present, histories of wars, histories of individual reigns, histories of the French monarchy, were produced in large numbers and testified to the popularity of the subject. Even monastics, interested in uncovering and analyzing the documents of their own orders, gave some attention reveals that history on any subject was of interest. Le Ragois' Instruction sur l'histoire de France et Romaine poses simplistic questions and answers about French history, explaining the utility of history as that which "... nous donne des instructions de poltie et de morale," (Ibid., l.) Some of the periodicals, like the Bibliothèque choisie, Nouvelles de la république des lettres, and La muse historique, are impressive for their concern with historical objectivity and impartiality. Considerable attention was given to reviews of historical work. In the body of this chapter, I have discussed only formal histories or historical compilations. Therefore, I have neglected to classify the multitude of philosophical tracts on history, which form an entire literature in themselves.
to those of their nation's past. There were, undoubtedly, certain centers of interest which were more popular than others. In the early seventeenth century, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were particularly emphasized, although one can also find attention directed to Clovis and Saint Louis of the medieval period. 49

By the end of the seventeenth century, we can detect specific changes amongst the interests of historians. Writers of narrative history increasingly divorced their works from the erudite traditions established in the monasteries. This is not to say that their works lacked the appearance of scholarship. In fact, most historians claimed that their works were truthful representations of historical events, and many utilized the trappings of scholarship—footnotes, sources, indices—to add credibility to their claims. For the most part, however, erudition did not appear to be the most crucial element of historical work. By the end of the century, folio volumes were replaced by pocket or small books, multi-volume compilations gave way to abridgements, and detail was relinquished for broad general ideas. 50

As the eighteenth century approached, we find the historian becoming increasingly a moralist. Literature

49 Martin, Livre, pouvoirs et société, I, 204; see 197-206.
50 Ibid., 774.
describing the "honnête homme" became the focal point of philosophers, social commentators, political spokesmen as well as historians between the years 1680 and 1700. At the same time, there was a growing interest in psychological studies and portraiture. These interests necessarily led to the composition of histories with a broader scope and a greater concern with causation.

The histoire raisonnée was the form which best developed these new concerns. In this genre, the historian could combine his moralistic teachings with objective historical detail in a pleasing and acceptable literary style. The author of the histoire raisonnée constructed an integrated historical account which included the author's own critical observations. While this form remained unrefined during the years under study, it was nonetheless the form which eighteenth-century historians like Voltaire, DuBos, and Montesquieu inherited and developed.

The form of the histoire raisonnée was adopted during this period by men who were influenced by their social, political, and economic milieu. To better understand the generation of this form, we must now turn to a study of the milieu of the authors of histoires raisonnées.

51 Ibid., II, 826-30. Martin comments that this interest in psychology is revealed by the fact that twenty-two printings of Pascal's Pensées were made between 1669 and 1700. During this period, the Maxims of La Rochefoucauld and the Caractères of La Bruyère were also popular.
CHAPTER IV

HISTORIANS AND THEIR MILIEU

Histories written between 1660 and 1720 were as much a product of the milieu of the author as of his creative genius. Therefore, it is essential to understand the concepts and pressures which operated upon the historian, if we are to appreciate fully the historiographical developments of this era. This type of analysis has been the subject of the preceding chapters of this dissertation. In Chapter I, I have tried to depict the political and intellectual attitudes toward history and toward the concepts of development, change, and time. In Chapter II, I have tried to portray the antecedents and models of seventeenth-century historical work, and to show its impact on seventeenth-century authors of history. In Chapter III, I have described the varied historical conceptions which found their way into the histoire raisonnée. Now, in Chapter IV, I would like to analyze the personal backgrounds and the social-political context of the authors of the histoire raisonnée. I hope to prove that the backgrounds of the authors limited their historical interests to those matters closest to their personal experience and personal needs.
Their philosophy of history, the scope of their works, and their choice of detail were seriously affected by the milieu in which they operated. The personal environment of these authors—that is, their habitat, their career, and their social class—led to a consciousness which influenced their writing. Likewise, the social and political context of these authors placed restrictions upon their sources of information, their salary, and their freedom. Finally, the overlapping jurisdictions of disciplines such as history, literature, and journalism; affected the style and the interests of historians. This milieu will be examined in the following pages.

Personal Background

Of a group of thirty-seven authors who wrote contemporary histoires raisonnéees, we have details pertaining to the place of birth and death of thirty-one authors.¹ This information can be collated in the following way. (See table below.) Nine of the authors were born and died in Paris. Another thirteen were born elsewhere, but moved to Paris during the course of their lifetime and died there. Nine authors were both born and died outside of

¹ Most of the information presented in this chapter pertaining to the personal backgrounds of the authors is derived from Michaud, Biographie Universelle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Born and Died Paris</th>
<th>Born X Died Paris</th>
<th>Born X Died X</th>
<th>Born X Died X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antoine Aubery</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas Boileau</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Bossuet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri de Bougainvilliers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finé de Brianville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis-Henri de Brienne</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger de Bussy-Rabutin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>François de Callières</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent-Claude Chalons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbé de Choisy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Géraud de Cordemoy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Daniel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Baptiste Dubos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>François Faure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippe Labbe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles A. de La Fare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac de Larrey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Puget de La Serre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Le Gendre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri P. de Limiers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guillaume Marcel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel de Marolles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Pellisson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Racine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>René Richard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon de Rieuxcourt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis R. de Saint-Simon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtiz de Sandras</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoine Varillas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calude de Vertron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donneau de Vizé</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

°Authors who lived part of their lives in Paris.

No information exists for Boyer des Rochés, Claude Jourdan, Jean Epistalier, La Bizardière, La Motte le Noble, and Mirat de La Tour.
Paris. In other words, twenty-one of the authors under study lived in Paris for at least part of their lives, as opposed to ten who had no ties to the city. Curiously, no examples exist of authors who were born in Paris but died elsewhere. These figures seem to confirm the fact that Paris was indeed a center of creative activity.

More important for our purpose, however, is to recognize the effect of living in the capital city. Paris, and its neighboring model city of Versailles, were also the centers of courtly and social life. It was here that authors were best able to observe their King, his court, and his government. It was here that authors could best negotiate for sinecures or offices. Likewise, it was here that authors could be best controlled by the arm that offered the greatest rewards. Paul Pellisson, Jean Racine, François de Callières, and Simon de Riencourt may have been best able to describe the functioning of the political machinery of France, but they were also most subject to reprisals if they failed to heap sufficient praises on their King. Authors who lived outside of Paris, like Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, Isaac de Larrey, and Henri Philippe de Limiers

---

Pottinger's sample of 600 authors writing between 1500 and 1791 confirms this geographical trend. Four hundred and forty authors (73 per cent) were born outside Paris, but only 152 (25 per cent) died outside Paris; 109 (19 per cent) were born in the capital and 270 (45 per cent) died there. See French Book Trade, 11.
did not suffer from these limitations and were in a position to discuss the economic ills, the religious persecutions, and the social degeneracy within the kingdom. The freedom which developed from their distance consequently made them less prepared to discuss the internal government of France. These differences in the locality of the authors of the histoire raisonnée can be perceived in the subject matter of their works.

Likewise, the occupation of a historian influenced the scope of his history. During the period 1660-1720 the writing of history was an avocation rather than a profession. The historians in our sample all distinguished themselves in some other position before turning to the writing of history. The great majority held posts as lawyers, officers or ministers of the King, ecclesiastics, or military leaders. Géraud de Cordemoy, descended from an old family of Auvergne, was a lawyer, as was Paul Pellisson. Henri de Boulainvilliers, Bussy-Rabutin, Courtitz de Sandras, and Charles Auguste de La Fare followed military careers. Fine de Brianville was a chaplain to the King, René Richard was a royal censor, Henri-Auguste Brienne and his son, Louis-Henri, were both ministers of the King, and Simon de Riencourt served as conseiller correcteur de la chambre des comptes. Jacques Bossuet was both a preacher at Metz and Paris, tutor to the dauphin, and finally Bishop
of Meaux. Abbé Choisy, Père Gabriel Daniel, and Philippe Labbe all followed ecclesiastical careers for most of their lives.

Most authors of the *histoire raisonnée* dabbled in more than one field before turning to history. These writers were men of diversified experiences and interests. Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, for example, began his studies at the age of seven at the collège d'Harcourt. At eleven, he changed to the collège de Beauvais in Paris, where he studied theology and law. In 1647 he was tonsured and began his theological studies around 1652. From theology, he moved to law, becoming an *avocat* around 1656. His poetic inclinations were already pronounced at that time, and his brother, Gilles, was recognized as a poet by 1659 when he entered the Académie. Nicolas began to publish various poetic verses between 1663 and 1666, and in 1685, he entered the Petite Académie. His appointment as *historiographe* in 1677 was an outgrowth of his literary abilities.\(^3\)

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet wrote history in order to fulfill his function as tutor to the dauphin and to illustrate his religious and universalistic perspective

---

of the world. Jean Donneau de Vizé began as an ecclesiastic, but left this calling to write comedies, plays, and satires. He founded the popular journal, *Le mercure galant*. From these interests and abilities, he later earned a pension as *historiographe du Roi*.

Historians brought their diverse interests to the material of history, and often were able to provide insights which their experience had provided. The scope of their works was broadened as a result of their backgrounds and training in more than one area. Authors of the *histoire raisonnée* were, as Lucien recommended, men of experience and men of action. By and large, they lived the events they recounted. Experience, social position, and talent were necessary qualities of the historian, according to Sorel. The historian of this period and genre was not isolated from the activity of professionals associated with the functions of State. In fact, he was a part of these affairs, and he reflected them in his writing.

To analyze the social positions of this group of authors is a difficult task, especially since determinants of class were varied and often inconsistent. It is therefore impossible to determine the class of each author with

---


5 Sorel, *De la prudence*, 69.
certainty. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, a man's social class was dependent both on his birth and on his office. Increasingly, wealth also became a determinant of class, because money could buy offices which carried prestige. Therefore, a certain mobility existed, enabling the movement from one class to another. Nevertheless, we can ascertain that the authors represented primarily the noblesse de robe, the bourgeoisie, the clergy, and in lesser numbers, the noblesse d'êpée.

The noblesse d'êpée, the aristocratic nobility of birth, usually followed careers in the army or at court. The great majority of these nobles were privately tutored in military affairs and sent to military academies which emphasized social grace and military training. Training in literary techniques and language arts was neglected. Army careers tended to bring glory rather than wealth, and throughout the seventeenth century, the noblesse d'êpée experienced increasing impoverishment. To combat their financial plight, many nobles married into families of wealthy financiers and bourgeoisie. Colbert's daughters, for example, were all married to great noblemen at court.  

---

6Pottinger, French Book Trade, 13; Lough, Seventeenth-Century France, 72.

7Lough, ibid., 77; 80.
In this way, noble blood was mixed by the end of the seventeenth century, so that we can not always distinguish the noblesse d'epée from the bourgeoisie. The clergy too, often considered a distinct social class, was formed primarily by the second and third sons of the hereditary nobility who could not inherit the offices of their fathers--positions reserved for the eldest sons. The clergy, which has come to represent a distinct class, could not be distinguished easily from the nobility of birth.

In the writing of history, the interests and experiences of the noblesse d'epée were made apparent. Charles Sévin, marquis de Quincy—a respected lieutenant of the King—is best known for his detailed military history of the reign of Louis XIV. Both Henri comte de Boulainvilliers and Louis Rouvroy duc de Saint-Simon made clear in the narratives their view that governments will degenerate if they try to function without the support of the noblesse d'epée. Both authors have nothing but disdain for Louis' use of "bourgeois" ministers, be they intendants or secretaries. Some historians, like Charles Auguste de La Fare, were content to write memoirs of their experiences at court or on the battlefield. For the most part, the works of these authors did not have the same breadth as those written by the noblesse de robe.

From authors representing the clergy, there appears no distinct type of history which was composed. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet has become famous for his providential,
universal history. Other than him, few members of the clergy approached history from a religious perspective. Many of them wrote panegyrics of the reign of Louis. This is true, for example, of the works of Finé de Brianville, François Faure, and René Richard. Others, like Philippe Labbe, dabbled in chronology and in the form of the histoire abrégé—an uninspired summation of the reign of Louis XIV or of all of the French kings. The Abbé de Choisy has become well-known for his Mémoires, which delve into psychological analyses of key historical persons. He is considered to be one of the founders of psychological portraiture. Finally, there were some members of the clergy, like Vincent-Claude Chalons and Gabriel Daniel, who wrote serious and detailed narrative histories. In short, the clergy, which was a distinct social group, was not a congenial group with respect to the types of history they wrote.

The noblesse de robe were originally descended from the ranks of the wealthy bourgeoisie. The wealth of the bourgeoisie, accumulated through financial or mercantile activity, enabled them to purchase hereditary official posts; some of these posts conferred nobility on their holders. The robe nobility held positions as parlementaires, ministers,
intendents, and lawyers. 

8 They were usually educated in a collège from the ages of fourteen to twenty, where they learned Latin and religious subjects. From the collège, many continued their studies in a university. 

9 They were carefully tutored in language arts so they could distinguish themselves as lawyers and teachers. The noblesse de robe, then, were often descended from the bourgeoisie, but were able to become part of the hereditary nobility through the offices they held. They formed the most literate group within the society.

The largest percentage of authors of the histoire raisonnée came from this class. They also composed by and large the most valuable histories of the period. Paul Pellisson, Géraud de Cordemoy, Antoine Varillas, Jean-Baptiste Dubos, Isaac de Larrey, Charles de Souvigny Sorel, Lenglet Dufresnoy all made their contribution to the development of historical consciousness during this period. The noblesse de robe also had its share of panegyrist, amongst whom were Claude du Vertron, Donneau de Vizé, Simon de Riencourt, François de Callières, Guillaume Marcel, and Jean Puget de La Serre. From the pens of the noblesse de robe, we find a generally more polished style, broader

---


9 Pottinger, French Book Trade, 14-16.
scope, and greater concern with historical analysis. It was by this group, for the most part, that the *histoire raisonnée* was developed.

The upper bourgeoisie was comprised of men of wealth whose trade or office did not confer upon them the rank of nobility. Merchants, financiers, and lesser officers of the King belonged to this class. Many, however, were becoming assimilated into the robe nobility, either through marriage or through the purchase of offices. Many of the authors in this study emerged from bourgeois families which had been able to buy administrative and judicial posts. Pierre Corneille was born in 1606 to a family of magistrates in Normandy. Jean Racine's father held a local law-court position and was considered to be a member of the upper bourgeoisie. The artistic excellence of Jean Racine as a playwright earned him the post of trésorier de France. This post, conferred by Louis, was valued because it transferred noble rank to his children. Jean de la Bruyère's father was an administrator of rentes. Nicolas Boileau was born into a respected bourgeois family: his father, and his other relatives, held judicial positions. Specifically, Boileau's father was a clerk of the Grand Chambre du Parlement.\(^\text{10}\)

Louis Le Gendre, a distinguished historian,

was born in Rouen in 1665 to poor parents. His career was made possible by the patronage and protection of François de Harlay. Similarly, Jean Héraud de Gourville, Jean Le Clerc, and Pierre Bayle can be considered members of the bourgeoisie.

This class of the bourgeoisie, along with the nobility, comprised the largest percentage of authors during the seventeenth century. Pottinger's statistics on 309 authors writing between 1500 and 1791 shows that 207 originated from the Third Estate. Of these, ninety-four held legal or semilegal positions in the State administration. Eighty-five families represented the nobility. Fifty-two authors inherited wealth from their ancestors, but of these, only twelve lived during the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{11} My analysis of historians also reveals that a large percentage of authors came from the classes of the Third Estate and the noblesse de robe. Their writing ability was superior to that of the noblesse d'épée. The breadth of their interests and experiences gave them an insight into the importance of government and administration. Their occupations provided them with a certain amount of expertise to write history. Yet, at the same time, they were usually dependent on patronage, and were frequently forced to fashion their writings to

\textsuperscript{11}Pottinger, \textit{French Book Trade}, 8-10, 82-84.
suit the tastes of the less-educated noblesse d'épée in the hope of obtaining their recognition. As social aspirants, they were often bound by social conventions and restricted by literary rules. It is therefore appropriate to describe the social and political context in which most of these authors worked.

Social and Political Context

Before depicting the patronage system, court setting, and salon societies which influenced French authors living in Paris, we must remember that not all authors were affected by these pressures. Some of them lived in provincial areas and had little contact with the pretensions and tastes of the Court. Charles Auguste de La Fare, a well-known memorialist, gained his experiences on the battlefield rather than at court. Vincent Chalons, author of Histoire de France, was born at Lyon and died canon of the cathedral of Mans in 1694. Others, although they considered themselves French, lived all or most of their lives outside France. In fact, two of our most influential and far-sighted historians—Isaac Larrey and Henri Philippe de Limiers—were Huguenot émigrés, and wrote their French histories outside of the country. Limiers

12 Lough, Seventeenth-Century France, 198.
was actually born at the end of the seventeenth century in Holland of French parents, and never lost his association with his French homeland. Unfortunately, we have little other information about his background. His work, however, is filled with diversions on the subjects of religious oppression, economic hardships, and the dangers of absolutism. These candid commentaries, no doubt a reflection of his own experiences and the greater freedom of the press in Holland, add appreciably to the interest of this work. Larrey, born in 1638 at Montivilliers of Protestant parents, escaped from France after 1685 and became conseiller de cour et d'ambassade to the elector of Brandenburg. His Histoire de France sous le règne de Louis XIV was first published in 1718, far away from the influences of the French court.\(^\text{13}\) The work is remarkable for its fairly objective tone, its lack of artistic embellishment, and its factually accurate content.

The authors writing under the aegis of the court, or with the aim of gaining its recognition, were not able to remain this impartial. Most authors who flocked to Paris did so precisely to press for the patronage of the King or wealthy courtiers. By the middle of the seventeenth century, acceptance of money for artistic

\(^{13}\text{Michaud, Biographie Universelle, XXIV, 542; XXIII, 276-77.}\)
work was no longer seen as degrading to the author.\textsuperscript{14}

In any case, very few authors had the independent wealth to be able to write without some means of support. In addition to the King, Queen, and royal family, such wealthy individuals as the Duchess de Nemours, Colbert, Fouquet, Helvetius, Seguier, and Mazarin dispensed patronage to worthy writers.\textsuperscript{15} The device of the eulogistic dedication developed to honor the patrons; in 1643, Corneille attached a dedication to his play Cinna, comparing his patron, a tax-farmer, to Emperor Augustus.\textsuperscript{16}

The memorialists and historians who were subject to the Court observed a rigidly controlled formalism in the lives of its participants. Louis XIV supervised letters, as well as political, social, and religious life, so as to make France a model for the entire world.\textsuperscript{17} Upon coming to the throne, he insisted upon ruling with firmness, dignity, grandeur, and magnificence. Ceremony became a controlling principle at court and Louis, himself, became its slave.\textsuperscript{18} The external grandeur of the King

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}Pottinger, \textit{French Book Trade}, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 85; Bourgeois and André, eds., \textit{Les sources}, IV, ii.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Lough, \textit{Seventeenth-Century France}, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Wright, \textit{French Classicism}, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Wiley, \textit{Formal French}, 165-66; Barrière, \textit{Essai sur les moeurs et les usages du dix-septième siècle}, 76-84.
\end{itemize}
shown in his every move from his waking moment, was as important as the decisions of State. Historians of the reign often filled their works with descriptions of these ceremonies—the entrance of the King and Marie-Thérèse in 1661, the coronation of the King, the splendid assemblage of courtiers, the ballet and festivals were all subjects for description. Some historians, like Louis Le Gendre, even tried to find an explanation for these displays:

Dans les commencemens du Regne, ce ne furent que réjouissances, festins; ballets, courses de bagues, carousels, ce jeune Prince se délassant dans tous ces nobles passe-temps... pour briller aux yeux du Peuple, qui aime le spectacle, et qui ne juge de leur puissance que par ces apparences de grandeur. Jamais Prince n'a mieux entendu cette pompe de bienfaisance, qui fait honneur au Trône, et releve l'éclat de la Royauté. Sa Cour a toujours été une école publique de magnificence et de politesse....

...ce Prince n'épargnant rien pour être somptueux en tout, cette magnificence n'étoit ni ostentation, ni pur plaisir, augmentant dans l'esprit du Peuple le respect et la soumission, et dans celui des Etrangers l'idée qu'ils s'étoient formée, et des richesses de l'Etat, et de la grandeur d'âme du Prince qui le gouvernoit....

The luxury of the Court, which required nobles to purchase lavish costumes for each new ceremony, was merely another means of control. The magnificence of the displays in

19Louis Le Gendre, Essai de L'histoire du règne de Louis le Grand jusques à la paix générale 1697 (Cologne, 1700), 28-29, 87.
time became tiring, and the formalism of the Court contained seeds of boredom. This situation led Mme. de la Fayette to remark: "Toujours les mêmes plaisirs, toujours aux mêmes heures, et toujours avec les mêmes gens." 20

To live as a courtier, one had to remember constantly the necessity of control, display, and formal conduct. Anything less was unbecoming to a member of the Court. The influence of the classical rules of art on personal conduct is reflected in this introspective statement made by Henri-Auguste de Brienne:

"...je parlai avec plus de chaleur que je ne devois. Mais on ne garde pas toujours les règles de la bienséance quand on est véritablement offensé." 21

Such a life was also marked by boredom and intrigue. Courtiers had too little to occupy their time, and spent much of it in idle gossip. The memoirs of the period faithfully report the prevalent rumors and petty intrigues at Court. Saint-Simon, for example, married to a woman who was appointed lady-in-waiting to the Duchesse de Berry, could rely upon the women of highest rank for information. Amongst his sources were the Duchesse de Villeroi, Mme. de Levi, Mme. de Nogaret, Princesse

---


21 Henri Auguste de Lomenie, comte de Brienne, Mémoires du comte de Brienne, ministre et premier secrétaire d'État (3 vols.; Amsterdam, 1719), III, 78.
d'Ursins, as well as the Duc de Beauvilliers, the Duc de Chevreuse, Pontchartrain, Chamillard, and le Père Tellier. His forty-one volume Mémoires was composed with the aid of many diverse sources, including oral testimony from servants and ministers, and well as other histories and memoirs, genealogies, and dictionaries.  

When members of the court society were not waiting idly for the attentions of the King, they devoted themselves to the purification of the French language. The Court viewed itself as the arbiter of language, and felt duty-bound to maintain an aristocratic and socially refined set of linguistic regulations. As we have seen, classicism was the embodiment of these concerns. Coincident with the rules of classicism was the creation of a new social type, l'honnête homme, and a new social institution, le salon.  

L'honnête homme was the personification of the refined aristocrat. He was a man of judgment, taste, sense, breeding, polish, and wit. La Rochefoucauld defined him as "...celui qui ne se pique de rien". Marked by moderation in his every action, and a well-rounded background and development, l'honnête homme embodied
classical virtues. All authors of the period dependent upon or seeking to please the Court depicted political and social figures in these terms. This is nowhere more true than in descriptions of Louis XIV; he is presented as a man of constant control, moderation, good sense, and breeding:

... un zèle ardent et infatigable pour le bien de la Religion; main un zèle sans indiscretion, une justice sans rigueur, une clemence sans foiblesse, une valeur sans temerité, un esprit sans prévention, une memoire sans embarras, une imagination sans égarement, une vigilance sans agitation, un bonheur sans orgueil ... son coeur neanmoins se trouve toujours dans une égalité parfaite, sans mélange de trouble et d'inquiétude.  

The historian of the Court, then, was bound by the linguistic tastes and social codes of the courtiers. His history often seemed a stereotype of classical values.

Questions of language, of taste, and of ethical, social codes were discussed at length in the salons. Formed originally by women to occupy their time, these groups delved into questions of love, preciosity, character, and psychology. Following in the footsteps of Corneille, Racine, Pascal, La Fontaine, and Molière, the members of the salon tried to unravel the complexities of human nature.


They increasingly worked with portraits and tried to combine literary portraiture with character analysis. Historians quickly learned to incorporate these interests into their work. By the end of the seventeenth century, portraiture, causal explanations, and analyses of character were becoming a familiar element of the historian's work. The Court clearly influenced, and perhaps even controlled, the writing of French historians.

Literature of the seventeenth-century was written to appeal to the tastes of the upper classes. The audience was restricted largely to the noblesse de robe, the haute bourgeoisie, and the précieuses—those literary women of the salon. The historian, then, concerned himself with matters pertaining to these groups. Most did not bother to research or present the history of the common bourgeois.

27 There were other groups in France which, like the salon, existed to disseminate knowledge and most likely affected the writing of history. See Edelman, Attitudes of Seventeenth-Century France, 82-83; Brown, Scientific Organizations in Seventeenth-Century France (1620-1680) (Baltimore, 1934), 3-11. Adam, Histoire de la littérature française, V, 26-27.

28 Figures have been compiled to determine who were the reading public and the purchasers of literature during this period. See Martin, Livre, pouvoirs, et société, II, 962-63. He writes: "...le livre, en cette époque... est...un privilège avant tout destiné à une élite." See also Peter Burke, History and Theory, 1966, 140-41; Pottinger, French Book Trade, 28-33.
Reference to this group was almost always connected with criticism of the reign, since the author could readily depict the economic deprivation of the farmer or laborer.

Most historians sought to construct their works in accord with classical rules and proprieties. This, they reasoned, would be pleasurable to their readers, and would thereby insure success. This necessitated a careful choice of language and of subject matter appropriate to classical theory.

Inter-related Genres

The work of the historian cannot always be readily distinguished from the work of novelists during the years 1660-1720. We have seen that the work of memorialists ranged from authentic recollections of major historical events to apocryphal scenes, satiric depictions, and novel-memoirs. Similarly, the seventeenth-century realistic novel merged fact and fiction in a historical setting in order to create a verisimilar situation for the reader. History was viewed as the exemplary data of moral literature. Its value was derived from the exposition of moral truths. Therefore, the apology or panegyric was an appropriate form for the historian, and moral digressions were often more significant than objective presentations of fact.
The historian of the reign of Louis XIV also shared certain characteristics with the journalist. Both used documents, letters and treaties as factual support for the information presented. Both depicted similar contemporary events, concentrating primarily on political and military details. Both showed some interest in analyzing the causes of historical events.

If we examine the personal ties existing between historians, journalists, and men of letters, these similarities will be more understandable. A great many novelists were also historians. For example, Saint-Réal, author of the realistic tragedy Don Carlos, is also known for his commentary on history, De l'usage de l'histoire. Courtilz de Sandras worked in the genres of history, the apocryphal memoir, the romance, the pamphlet, the satire, and the realistic novel. In each of these forms, some history was included, but in many of them, fiction was equally prevalent. Woodbridge, his biographer, concludes that one cannot divorce the factual from the fictional in his works:

History there is in his writings, and often too much of it, but so distorted and so intermingled with cleverly devised incident of the author's invention, that it is well nigh impossible to say what is fact and what romance. However it may be, to call these works novels . . . would be an entire misunderstanding of their bearing. Bayle himself drew from them, . . . and today serious historians of the age of Louis XIV declare that not everything in his writings is apocryphal.29

Pierre Le Moyne was both a poet and a historian. Combining both these interests, he wrote an epic poem, *Saint-Louis*. His *De l'histoire* applies rules of literary art to historical materials, thereby merging the two disciplines. Nicolas Boileau, the well-known classical poet, and Jean Racine, the distinguished dramatist, became royal historiographers to Louis XIV. Boileau maintained close contacts with other literary artists, such as Mme. de Sévigné and Bussy-Rabutin. Jean Puget de La Serre, author of *Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième*, also wrote works on morality, literature, and drama. Both Scipion-Dupleix and Philippe Labbe were grammarians as well as historians. Bussy-Rabutin, like Courtiz de Sandras, wrote as a historian, memorialist, epistolarian, pamphleteer, and moralist. Charles de Souvigny Sorel, author of *L'histoire de la monarchie française* and *La science de l'histoire* also produced such literary works as *La vraie histoire comique de Françon*, *Les amours de Floris et de Cléonthe* and *Le berger extravagant*. Bernard de Fontenelle, commentator on the use of history, was a nephew of the famed playwright, Pierre Corneille.

This association between history and literature was not only a seventeenth-century phenomenon. The fusion was continued in the eighteenth century by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Duclos, Rousseau, and Diderot. Ira Wade contends
that Voltaire was attracted to history through his love of letters. "History offers the literary man an occasion to bring out the dramatic quality of events, to arrange in some effective way the unfolding of phenomena, to study character, motives, passions, opinions, and to draw moral conclusions for the public. . . ." The historian's association with the world of literature exposed him to new ways to treat man—that central figure in the drama of history. The author of the histoire raisonnée could emphasize criteria other than the scientific accumulation of historical fact which were equally important for the development of historical consciousness. The achievements of Enlightenment historians were initiated precisely through this seventeenth-century association between history and literature.

Authors of contemporary French histories often had affiliations with journalists. Mézeray, for example, was a member of the directing committee of the Gazette de France during the 1630's. The popular Mercure galant, appearing from 1672, was founded and published by Jean Donneau de Vizé until 1690. From 1714 to 1716, Hardouin le Fèvre de Fontenay was responsible for the

31 Hatin, Bibliographie historique, 8; Bourgeois and André, Les sources, IV, 26.
publication of thirty-three volumes of this journal. He also delved into history, writing the Journal sur le mort de Louis XIV et l'avenement de Louis XV à la couronne. Courtilz de Sandras founded Le mercure historique et politique as a counter-journal to the subjective and partial Mercure galant. The monthly gazette was edited by him from 1686-1689. Its contributors included Rousset and Bayle, both historians.

Claude Jourdan, historian and librarian, was actually involved with more than one journal. La Clef du cabinet des princes de l'Europe was written by him from 1704-1706. The Nouveau journal universel and Histoire abrégé de l'Europe were both edited by him. The long-lived Dutch journal, Nouveau journal universel, published from 1688-1792, was founded by Jourdan. This latter journal was published by J.T. Dubreuil for a period of time, and was so well-known to Limiers that he wrote his eulogy, and the eulogy of the journal in 1721:

Comme il avait l'art de dire la vérité d'une manière dont chaque parti était également satisfait, on le lisait partout avec plaisir, et l'on était surpris de trouver...toute la délicatesse des pensées et toute la force des expressions de l'ouvrage le plus médité.

---

32 De Ville, Index du Mercure de France, ix, xi; Bourgeois and André, *ibid.*, IV, 38.


34 Quoted in Hatin, *ibid.*, 88; see also Chapter III above, 134-43.
Clearly, Limiers had a close association both with Dubreuil and with the journal. Limiers himself controlled a journal, the Gazetted'Utrecht, after 1724.

Both journalists and men of letters travelled in the same circles as historians. Many historians actually worked in these other genres and vice versa. Therefore, it is not surprising that similarities exist amongst these disciplines. The associations affected the product. This is yet another clear way in which knowledge of the milieu of the historian makes his work more comprehensible.

The histoire raisonnée was an outgrowth of the milieu of its authors. The largest percentage of these authors were born in Paris or became Parisians. Most of these authors represented the noblesse de robe or haute bourgeoisie. They were largely men of diverse talents and interests. Both as a result of their geographical proximity to the Court and their socially inferior position, the authors were affected by the tastes of the aristocratic courtiers and the needs of the King. They were often economically, politically, and socially compelled to create works which were acceptable to this society. This necessitated the use of pure and controlled language with the depiction of events largely limited to the tastes of the upper classes. However, with the
increasing predominance of the salons, historians were able to devote more attention to portraiture, and to psychological analyses of character and motivation. The historians of this ilk were closely associated with novelists, poets, playwrights, and grammarians. They often reflected a concern for classical style in their works, and an interest in questions of morality, character, and motivation.

There were, of course, some historians of this period who were not associated with Paris or with the French court. Unfortunately, it is more difficult to determine the milieu in which these historians worked. Clearly, they were less susceptible to the censor's arm, and many were free from the financial control of royalist patrons. They were therefore able to express dissatisfaction with French government and society. Their histories do not bear the literary marks of French classicism to the same extent as Parisian writers. Many were associated with journalists who published satiric and critical gazettes about France and her king. In these journals, one also finds moralistic digressions, an interest in causation, and the use of documentary evidence. Products of two different societies, the historians reflected their milieu in the histoire raisonnée.
PART II
CHAPTER V

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

What is history? Is it the expose of man's follies or the record of his triumphs? Does it reveal a continual march toward progress or the constancy of human passions? Should it deal with all events that occurred in the past or only with those which elucidate important principles of behavior? Must the historian consider final and transcendental forces, or is this more properly the task of the philosopher and theologian? Is history a branch of literature subject to stylistic standards, or is it the field of the disinterested scientist? These are some of the questions which historians of the period 1660-1720 asked themselves. Their answers comprise their "philosophy of history."

Between the appearance of Pierre Le Moyne's De l'histoire in 1670 and Lenglet Dufresnoy's Méthode pour étudier l'histoire in 1713, the expressed philosophy of history changed significantly. In the decade of the 1670's history was viewed largely as a didactic art, in which the formal structure of the work was as important as the exposition of immutable truths of morality. By the end of the period (ca. 1713-1720), history was perceived increasingly
as the tableau of human life and civilization, depicting cultural diversity, temporal development, and human psychology. Historians were indeed conscious of the intellectual currents of the period, and their philosophy of history reflected these changing concepts.

Authors of the *histoire raisonné* often expressed their own philosophy of history in the introductions or throughout the text of their works. Others wrote separate tracts in which they examined the purpose, the form, and the nature of history. What they believed to be the value of history obviously affected the ways in which they constructed their histories. To examine the philosophy of history of the authors of this period will be the purpose of this chapter.

The Judgment of the Historian

Whether commentators endorsed a literary, moralistic or humanistic view of history, they all agreed that the judgment of the historian was the critical factor in the writing of good history. By means of the judgment of the author, Le Moyne wrote, "... the knowledge of Good and Evil must be unfolded; the Politick and Moral have their place; that Vertue is crown'd and Vice punish'd; that the Historian (hardly otherwise more than a Tale-teller) becomes a Statesman and a Soldier; makes himself Judge of Princes and their Ministers; and Arbitrator of their good and evil
Actions . . . . 1 Judgment was defined neither in terms of logic nor reason, but was the expression of the personal point of view of the author. Isaac de Larrey, for example, was criticized for his failure to compose eulogistic descriptions of particular battles which redounded to the glory of France. He was condemned for his use of maxims and sentences which were philosophic rather than political and moral in tone. Both these factors, the critic claimed, revealed an inexcusable lack of judgment, and consequently resulted in the composition of worthless history. 2 Similarly, Gabriel Daniel was criticized by Henri de Boulainvilliers for his erudition which seemed "médiocre" and his "esprit de cabale et de partialité," but was praised in the Journal des Savants for his "reflexions instructives" and his "maxims les plus solides." 3 Again, the judgment displayed in a given work was determined by the critic's personal beliefs. What supported these beliefs was considered good judgment; what challenged them was obviously poor judgment.

1 Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 117-18.

2 "Lettre de M.N. à M. de N. sur l'Histoire de France, sous le règne de Louis XIV, par Larrey," Le Nouveau Mercure (Mercure de France), December, 1719, 4-5, 11-12, 20-21, 38.

3 Henri le comte de Boulainvilliers, Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France (3 vols.; The Hague, 1727), I, 201, 204; Journal des Scavans (Amsterdam, 1665 ff.), LIV, 1713, 137. Mezeray was criticized even more vehemently by Boulainvilliers. See ibid., 196-98.
historian would not be so central to the exposition of historical materials. Theoretically, at least, the historian could try to act as a scientist, so that his personal judgment need not enter his narrative. During our period, however, a basic characteristic of the *histoire raisonnée* was precisely that the historian's point of view should be superimposed on the formless facts. It was the judgment of the author, shown both in his choice of materials and his comments, which gave life and meaning to the bare details. The facts chosen and the judgments on these facts worked together to substantiate the author's purpose.

The Purpose of History

For almost all the historians of this period, the purpose of history was to instruct: history was a didactic art. To say this, however, is to say almost nothing. The more important question revolves about the nature of the instruction which the historian sought to offer. Throughout the period 1660-1720, we can see a development in the minds of the authors with regard to the type of instruction that history could provide. In the early period (1660's and 1670's), writers generally argued that history would furnish examples of political, moral and religious truths. By the end of the period (1690's to 1710's), authors tried to examine the principles themselves--that is, they used history to expose the motivations of men, the customs of nations, and the causes of change. These concerns were not,
of course, antithetical to the truths of politics, religion, and morals. Late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century historians did not formulate new purposes of history. Their aims, also, were didactic. But, the instruction they tried to provide was more specific and more profound. The difference was not a distinction of kind, but of degree.

The idea that history should instruct readers in political and moral truths had been argued eloquently by both Polybius and Cicero. More immediate to French authors were statements by Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century, and Jean Silhon in the early seventeenth century that through history, the reader could find an exposé of virtuous deeds and of evil behavior. The examples depicted would not only instruct readers in the principles of morality, but would remain a storehouse of valuable experience for future readers.

This point of view was expressed by François de Callières, secrétaire du roi, who in his Panégyrique historique du Roy, wrote:

... l'Histoire nous en fournit qui ont fait paroître de grandes vertus, mais elle nous apprend

---

4 Nadel, History and Theory, 1964, 294-95.
5 Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, 99; Jean Silhon, Histoires remarquables tirées de la seconde partie du ministre d'estat, avec un discours des conditions de l'histoire (Paris, 1632), x-xi.
au même-temps qu'ils les ont obscurcies par d'aussi grands vices ... .

Likewise, Le Moyne, whose rhetorical tract De l'histoire appeared in 1670, supported this contention that history was a universal school for all men. Although each individual could gain from the experiences cited, history particularly served the needs of princes and leaders. Through history, "... Princes are taught to be Just and Moderate; Ministers Intelligent and Faithful; Captains Wise before their time, and Expert without the Assistance of Experience." Consequently, it stood to reason that history should include only examples of great events, and be composed with the appropriate aristocratic language to appeal to the interests of the elevated within the society. Many of the theorists who supported this argument, like Bossuet and François Faure, claimed that history's prime function was to provide examples specifically for princes. Such spokesmen mouthed fairly simplistic didactic aims, which revealed little understanding of the complexities of political and moral realities.

---


7 Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 25, 53, 92.

8 Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, Chefs-d'oeuvre de Bossuet (Paris, 1844), 1; François Faure, Louis le Grand, Panégyrique (Paris, 1680), 10.

9 A typical definition of history is the following one by Le Ragois: "... elle nous donne des instructions
However, during this same period, some historians did begin to recognize that history should provide examples not of philosophic principles, but of the concrete components of these principles. Daniel Lombard, himself an exponent of the less sophisticated view, at least recognized the distinction. In differentiating between the works of Daniel and Mézeray, he stated that the former saw history as a means to instruct his readers in the manners, customs and character of peoples, and to present a clear and distinct idea of historical events. Mézeray, on the other hand, tried to influence the way of life of his readers, by illustrating liberty, public well-being, and true religion. This latter type, Lombard claimed, would provide the better instruction, for it would make men into better citizens and Christians.⁹⁰

Many historians of this period recognized the central role of the individual in formulating political and moral reality. They further realized that man was a complicated animal to comprehend. Saint-Réal stated that men furnished the material of history. To know history, one must know men; to study history, one must study the motives,

de politique et de morale." Politics is defined as "l'art de se conduire parmy les hommes, et de faire réussir ses desseins," and morality as "... l'art de regler ses moeurs selon les principes de la vertu." (Le Ragois, Instruction sur l'histoire de France, 1-2.)

⁹⁰Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 52-53. See also ibid., Preface, 6-12, 153-54.
opinion and passions of men. Limiers, too, in addition to arguing that history provided precepts of morals, politics, and religion, asserted that "L'Histoire aprend aux hommes à se connoître ... ." To be useful, history must expose and examine the motivations and psychology of men.

If the purpose of history is to instruct by providing concrete examples, what specific details should be portrayed? It is here that some of the historians of the period 1660-1720 reveal their appreciation of cultural diversity and their interest in causal analysis. Paul Pellisson, historian to Louis XIV, believed that to instruct the writer had to explain "... les véritables dispositions des choses par toute l'Europe, les préparatifs longtemps dissimulés et cachés, les causes secretés de ces grands effets ... ." According to Saint-Simon, the historian could best teach by exposing the origins, causes, and connections of events "... pour être utile, il faut que le récit des faits découvre leurs origines, leurs causes, leurs suites et leurs liaisons des uns aux autres ... ."

To do this, however, the historian had to first discover the interests, vices, passions, hatreds, and friendships of

11Dallas, Le roman français, 158-59; Dulong, L'abbé de Saint-Réal, I, 105.

12Henri Philippe de Limiers, Annales de la monarchie française (3 vols.; Amsterdam, 1724), I, Preface, 2.

the individuals involved. The more one understood these factors, the more one could derive instruction from the manners of men and from the causes of events. In the eighteenth century, Boulainvilliers also stressed the value of tracing origins and causes of events, both by examining human motivations and by analyzing cultural foundations.

Géraud de Cordemoy emphasized perhaps more than any other theorist the crucial need to understand the causes of events. Initially, he stated that princes benefited most from a reading of history, since they could find examples of what to imitate and what to avoid. Despite this seemingly superficial dictum, Cordemoy continued that the events which should be recounted were not deeds but causes:

Ne raconter que les grands événemens, et n'écrire rien en détail que les causes des grands changemens ... Songer bien que les Rois sont à la verité les plus remarquables personnes de l'Histoire, mais que les grands changemens en sont le véritable sujet ... .

To understand change, one needed to understand cause. The ruler of a nation would derive better instruction from an

---

14Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 5-6; see also ibid., 14, 18.


16Géraud de Cordemoy, "Ce qu'on doit observer en écrivant l'histoire," Divers traitez, 63-64; also 66; "De la nécessité de l'histoire, de son usage, et de la maniere dont il faut méler les autres sciences en la faisant lire à un prince," ibid., 70.
analysis of cause than from an expose of deeds, of formalities, and of battles.

We can see that the concept of what was to be taught was re-evaluated during the years covered by this study. Most theorists agreed that the purpose of history was to instruct men in politics, morals, and religion. Some of the more far-sighted thinkers, like Cordemoy, Pellisson, Limiers, and Boulainvilliers perceived that one could not discover general principles without first grasping their concrete particular manifestations. It was therefore necessary to study humanity, causation, and civilization. In this way, theorists came to be conscious of historical differentiation and development. They understood the

17 Not all of the historians writing during the years 1660-1720 argued that the purpose of history was to instruct. Some, in addition to the task of instruction, felt that history should provide pleasure. Arguments to this effect can be found in Gabriel Daniel, Histoire de la milice française (2 vols.; Paris, 1721), I, Preface, i; Courtilz de Sandras, Histoire de la guerre de Hollande (The Hague, 1689), Preface; François Timoléon de Choisy, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV, in Mémoires de l'Abbé de Choisy (Paris, 1966), 21; Jean Herault de Gourville, Mémoires de Gourville (2 vols.; Paris, 1894), I, 6. These historians stated that all they wished to do was to please their readers. This point of view was more typical of memorialists than of historians. Some of the historians who argued that their purpose was to instruct also claimed that they wished to leave a record for posterity. One can find such statements, for example, in Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, Preface, a ii, b; in Sorel, De la prudence, 25; and in Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, II, part 2, 363. For the most part, historians did not yet feel this was a sufficient defense in itself. The didactic end was by far the most popular view.
crucial role of the human being in effecting history and
they also perceived the complexities involved in analyzing
his character.

What is particularly striking is the absence of
providential theories. Most of the commentators who even
bother to address themselves to this matter do not claim
that history will instruct men in the moral imperatives of
Providence. Even Charles Sorel, who stated that history
would offer instruction in the mysteries of faith and reli-
gion, advised caution in the acceptance of miraculous
stories. The test for the admission of these stories should
be reason.\footnote{Sorel, De la prudence, 19; Sorel, Advertissem-
sur l'histoire, 109-110.} By submitting providential intervention to
the test of reason, historians took the first step toward
the total denial of God's power. When Pierre de Lesconvel
wrote his appraisal of the Histoire abrégé of Mézeray, he
criticized Mézeray for maintaining "popular" opinions about
supernatural events, rather than supporting natural theories
of causation.\footnote{Pierre de Lesconvel, Observations critiques sur
l'histoire de France écrite par Mézeray (Paris, 1700), 2-3.} Simon de Riencourt distinguished between
final and secondary causes even more explicitly:

Nous savons tous, que rien n'arrive dans le monde
que par la permission de Dieu ... mais l'Historien
ne doit point entrer dans ces considerations, son
devoir est d'exposer nêanment les actions des hommes,
et le motif pour lequel elles ont este entreprises
et exécutées. Car en effet, Dieu laisse agir les
Creatures raisonnables avec une liberté toute
entière: Il concourt véritablement avec les
causes secondes; mais il ne leur impose aucune
nécessité d'agir ... 20

In other words, historians came to see that it was man, not
God, who dominated the world and who was responsible for
its progress and its failures. The purpose of history was
to instruct men about the world in which they lived. Some
historians of this period felt that this instruction should
focus on the principles of politics, morality, and religion.
Others argued that one had to attack the problem from its
roots: one should seek to analyze man—his motivations,
passions, and virtues—and the world which men had created—
their governments, customs, and morals.

The Form of History

Renaissance and classical interests in language and
literature had a pronounced effect on the historian's concern
with the form and structure of his work. Although these
discussions on how to write well had been largely exhausted
by the late seventeenth century, some historians remained
concerned that their works reflect the standards of literary
excellence which had been established. We can detect signs
of conflict not only between the literary and non-literary
conception of history, but between Renaissance and classical
formulas of literary taste. Where the Renaissance man of

20Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française,
I, Discours, 17.
letters stressed the utility and beauty of harangues, discourse, and ornamentation in a literary work, the classicist emphasized the value of harmony, naturalness, and balance in a work of art.

Mézeray's work has often been cited as the prototype of seventeenth-century literary history. His aim was to amuse and interest his readers. His principal preoccupation was to compose in a beautiful style. To be agreeable was more important than to be correct; consequently, the details of history mattered little. Mézeray conceived of himself as a literary orator, with a strong sense of national pride. In his works, historical figures step forward from the tableau of history and pronounce moral soliloquies through harangues, tirades, and feigned discourse. Portraiture and narration are used as a means to enliven the dead and relatively meaningless details of history. Mézeray applied Renaissance conceptions of literary art to history. In so doing, he discounted the need for an objective and balanced representation of historical facts.

Rather than providing a model for later seventeenth-century authors, Mézeray was criticized by these authors precisely for the literary aspects of his work. Classicists, restrained by the values of raison, nature, ordre, and

21 Evans, L'Historien Mézeray, 8, 125, 128, 138; Bourgeois, Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française; IV, 666-67; Bourgeois and André, eds., Les sources, I, 299-301; Adam, Histoire de la littérature française, V, 330.
mesure, argued that history and literature had to follow the rules of *vraisemblance*. Beauty was found in simplicity, clarity, and precision, rather than in flamboyant ornamentation.  

Pierre de Lesconvel devoted an entire work, *Observations critiques sur l'histoire de France*, to a literary criticism of Mézeray's history. Contending that the *Histoire abrégé* was a work of literature as well as of history, Lesconvel reproached Mézeray for his use of common language, his tendency to exaggerate, his poor judgment, and his choice of materials. Of particular interest to Lesconvel is the author's style:

... que son stile est dur, qu'il fait quelquefois des periodes mal liées, et qu'il employe des termes barbares ou connus seulement du menu peuple ....

Lombard, also, had stated that while Mézeray's style was energetic, it was "... ni pur, ni élegant ...," and Daniel suggested that Mézeray should have excluded all proverbs, base expressions, and gibes.

In part, style was determined by subject matter.

---


By describing common details, and fabulous occurrences, Mézeray was indulging the desires of the menu peuple, Lesconvel claimed, rather than elevating their tastes through descriptions of aristocratic life. Moreover, his frequent exaggerations and his literary ostentation deprive his work of vraisemblance, the cardinal principle of classicist theory. Lombard, Daniel, and Lesconvel all used classical literary theory to criticize a Renaissance literary historian.

Pierre Le Moyne, poet and historian, believed that the form of history was its essence. He defines history as "... a continued Narration of things True, Great and Publick, writ with Spirit, Eloquence and Judgment; for Instruction to Particulars and Princes, and Good of Civil Society." Throughout De l'histoire (1670), however, it is clear that his major interest lies with stylistic considerations. He examines primarily the structure and order of a work of history, and the rules which govern its composition. The primary quality for a good history, we are told, is wit, which determines the judgment, spirit, and eloquence of the writer. The principal parts of history are the narration, judgment, harangues, and digressions.

25 See Lesconvel, Observations critiques, 3-5, 15-16, 27, 58-60, 98-100, 149, 152-53, 187-88. The same criticisms were brought against Larrey in "Lettre de M.N.," Nouveau Mercure, 22-36.

26 Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 53-54.
Whereas facts are the basic building materials of the historian, the artist must create a form which is externally pleasing. Likening the historian to an architect, Le Moyne writes: "This Knowledge of Order and Placing, is not less necessary for the Historian, if that be wanting, his richest Materials, il joyn'd or ill placed, will be but as Heaps of Stone without Mortar, Connexions, Symmetry and Form." To insure that the form is elegant, some materials must be withheld. As far as Le Moyne is concerned, this will not conflict with the historian's obligation to truth, because the nature of truth is moral rather than factual. Sentences, harangues, and digressions are useful because they support the moral end of the historian. Revealing his classicist bias, Le Moyne states that rhetoric is outmoded. In summation, he describes the style of history in the following terms:

*History admits nothing mean in her Stile, nothing Negligent or Vulgar: She must have politeness, Adjustment and Dress. . . . The Sublime Character, that is to say, the most elivated way of Writing, is of all the most proper for the Historick Stile.*

Le Moyne did not write in the genre of the *hhistoire raisonnée*. As a theoretician, however, he provided evidence of the seventeenth-century view that the classical form of a history was more important than its content.

---

27 *Ibid.*, 188.

A historian who did write in the genre of the *histoire raisonnée*, and who also addressed himself to the question of style, was Gabriel Daniel. Daniel believed that the style of a writer was crucial, both for a work's literary merit and for its historical value. Style, according to Daniel, should be noble, but should also be simple and natural. Both Livy and Julius Caesar can be emulated as models, Daniel states, for they wrote in a style which was lively, but precise. History, Daniel continues, has its own appropriate style and eloquence, which is natural, moderate, and simple:

La simplicité exclut les figures et les amplifications de Rhétorique, les Métaphores et les comparaisons trop fréquentes. Rien n'est plus ennuyant qu'un Historien qui écrit en Orateur. L'Histoire à son éloquence particulière ... il est si différent des tous les autres stiles, qu'il n'est jamais meilleur, que lorsqu'il est plus éloigné du stile Oratoire, du stile Académique, du stile qu'on appelle Didactique ... .

This is not to suggest, however, that literary techniques are unimportant. The historian must avoid the use of "romanesque" episodes, forced transitions, and harangues, primarily because feigned and contrived materials divert the writer from his portrayal of the truth. However, sentences, maxims, epiphonies, and occasional digressions can serve a useful function. The function is not


30Both Limiers and Riencourt agreed with this point of view that well-placed digressions could serve a useful purpose. See Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, I,
literary, but moral. Through these devices, the historian can exercise his duty of judgment, and can thereby create the form of the *histoire raisonnée*. In the case of Daniel, we have an example of a classicist who insisted upon stylistic excellence in a work of history. However, he related the value of these literary techniques to the historical criteria of accuracy and of judgment. In this way, style served both a literary and historical function.

Some of Daniel's contemporaries implicitly began to recognize that a conflict existed between the demands of truth and of style. As this belief developed, the emphasis on the form of history was slowly challenged. For example, how was René Rapin (1621-1687) to reconcile his statement that the historian should cling to truth as to religion with his more immediate concern about the structure of a historical composition? He tried to resolve the dilemma by claiming that "... la pureté de style, de la noblesse d'expression, de la grandeur de sentiments, et bien de la variété dans la narration ..." are necessary "... pour faire sentir la vérité, et y affectionner le Lecteur ...." He

---

31 For support of the preceding statements on Daniel, see *Histoire de France*, I, Preface, lxv-lxvii, lxxiii-lxxiv, xxii-xxiv.

claimed that Thucydides, presenting his materials with
great simplicity, therefore aided the exposition of truth,
whereas Livy, more elaborate in his literary techniques,
facilitated the more agreeable portrayal of truth. Nevertheless, an obvious conflict remained. Rapin chose to emphasize the composition, while giving verbal support to the importance of "la verité."

Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy, writing in the early years of the eighteenth century, likewise realized both the importance of literary form and of factual accuracy. He restated in Le Moyne's terminology that narration, judgment, maxims, and harangues constitute the body of a history. But unlike Le Moyne and Rapin, he understood that the duty of the historian was to penetrate the motives and causes of events, and to critically unravel the facts of history. Instead of emphasizing the literary aspects of the historian's craft, Lenglet Dufresnoy devoted far more attention to an analysis of valuable sources for the historian.34

Some historians, recognizing the dichotomy of truth and form, completely rejected literary techniques in historical writing. Larrey (1638-1729), for example, maintained that the historian should report facts simply, without any oratorical flair. Cordemoy (d. 1684) criticized

33Ibid., 267-68.
34Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 456-64.
the adherence of modern authors to formal rules of style. He claimed that the value of the ancients lay in their dictates of common sense and right reason, not in their stylistic regulations. Riencourt (d. 1693) condemned the use of maxims and discourse on the grounds that these devices stimulated the emotions of the author and led to the introduction of false materials. Fénelon (1651-1715) opposed the use of all superfluous ornamentation: the historian could best instruct through his pure narration, his clear diction, and his careful order.  

During the years 1660-1720, the importance of the literary form of history was discussed widely. Some historians, like Le Moyne, Lesconvel, and Rapin, argued eloquently in support of the simplicity and nobility of classical art forms. Other writers, like Daniel and Lenglet Dufresnoy, maintained that form had to be reconciled with the other equally relevant criteria of facts, subjects, and analysis. Some commentators, like Fénelon and Larrey, went so far as to reject the necessity for any purely literary techniques. The rejection of the literary view of history coincided with an increasing interest in the materials of history.

The Subject Matter of History

As the question of how to write history assumed less importance, commentators turned their attentions to an investigation of the appropriate subject matter of history. On this issue, they made their greatest contributions to historical theory. Their task was to instruct men in moral behavior through historical example. As we have seen, the didactic aims of the historian ranged from the exposition of moral maxims of vice and virtue to the explication of cultural diversities, national origins, and human motivations. With regard to the latter type, theorists argued that history should provide concrete examples, not philosophic maxims, of these subjects.\(^{36}\) As historians gravitated toward this position, they necessarily re-examined their views on the proper subject matter of history.

Of fundamental importance was the examination of cause. The interest in causation was by no means unique to historians of this period. Lancelot Voisin de la Popelinière, writing in the late sixteenth century, stated that "'there is little use in a fact--even if it is truly and simply reported--if the cause is lacking or the means by which it was brought about.'"\(^ {37}\) Many seventeenth-century

\(^{36}\) Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, Preface 37-97, 3-4; Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 366.

\(^{37}\) Huppert, Idea of Perfect History, 137.
theorists perceived the validity of La Popelinière's statement, and continued the thrust of his argument in their theoretical tracts.

Charles Sorel was one of the earliest seventeenth-century historians to recognize that the historian derived his principal value from the explication of motives and of causes. The analysis of cause, he stated, distinguished the historian from the simple chronologist, and provided the historian with his raison d'être. Similarly, Daniel argued that the research into causes was the most beautiful part of history, "... ce qui en fait l'âme, ce qui la soutint, ce qui lui donne de la dignité ..." According to Fénélon, the historian should omit no fact which would help uncover the causes of events. All liaisons and circumstances should be revealed: "Sans les circonstances, les faits demeurent comme décharnés: ce n'est que le squelette d'une histoire."

Cordemoy actually maintained that the most important causes were synonymous with the great events of history. Amongst the great events of ancient history, for example, he would include Candaules' love of his wife. While ordinarily not significant, this emotional attachment causes

38Sorel, La science de l'histoire, 41.
40Fénélon, "Lettre à M. Dacier," Oeuvres completes de Fénélon, VI, 638.
Candaules to transfer the Crown of Lydia to the house of Croesus. In this way, that which causes historical change becomes a great event worthy of the historian's attention.41 (One cannot help but recall similar analyses of petty motives by both Bayle and Voltaire.) In other words, according to Cordemoy, the important events of history are those which have influenced or have caused change. It is the exposition of this causal sequence which most profitably instructs the readers of history.

Saint-Réal was one of the earliest theorists of the period 1660 to 1720 to recognize the role of man as an agent of causal change. History's primary use, he maintained, is to provide examples of men's opinions and motivations. Since all men, regardless of class or position, are

41 Cordemoy, "Observations sur l'histoire d'Herodote," Divers traitez, 34-35. This is all that Cordemoy writes on the subject of the end of the Heraclid dynasty. The story is somewhat different than Cordemoy suggests. Candaules, known in Greek as Myrsilus, was killed ca. 685 B.C. by Gyges, who usurped the throne of Lydia. Gyges had been one of Candaules' ministers, and Candaules, intrigued by his wife's beauty, had shown her naked to Gyges. The queen was so infuriated that she plotted with Gyges to murder Candaules. Gyges then married the queen and ascended the throne. See F. A. Wright, Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors, ed. J. Lemprière (London, 1949), 124, and Paul Harvey, ed. and comp., The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature (Oxford, 1940), 192.

motivated by the same psychological forces, history need not be limited to the depiction of aristocratic life. It is men, he argues, who cause events to occur and thereby furnish history with its material:

... savoir, c'est connoître les choses par leurs causes; ainsi savoir l'Histoire, c'est connoître les hommes, qui en fournissent la matière, c'est juger de ces hommes sainement; étudier l'Histoire, c'est étudier les motifs, les opinions et les passions des hommes, pour en connaître tous les ressorts, les tours et les détours, enfin toutes les illusions qu'elles savent faire aux esprits, et les surprises qu'elles font aux coeurs.42

Man can be known, we are told, not by describing events but by examining motives: "... il faut toujours remonter aux motifs, si l'on veut connoître les hommes: car c'est dans leurs motifs, que l'on connoit proprement leur esprit, et toute l'étendue de ce dont il est capable."43 By so examining men's motives, Saint-Réal contends, we see that man's principal fault is that he is ambitious and vain. This "vanité de se distinguer" interferes with all his judgments, and makes man unjust, unfaithful, and partial. According to Saint-Réal, history is the vehicle to teach man these general traits of his character in order that he may better understand himself and his situation.44

42 Saint-Réal, De l'usage de l'histoire (Paris, 1671), 4; see also Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, I, 2-3, who repeats this statement almost verbatim.

43 Saint-Réal, De l'usage de l'histoire, 35.

44 Ibid., 17-19, 102-103, 109, 128-30.
La Fare comprehended the complexity of examining human motivations to a greater extent. Although he also believed that all men were essentially similar, he realized that the different circumstances of their lives gave rise to unique responses. History, he claimed, must show men exactly as they are. The value of the subject derives from the concrete and realistic record of human experiences:

Quel est donc mon dessein? C'est de faire comme un Tableau de la vie humaine. Il ne s'agit pas ici de ce que les Hommes doivent penser et faire, il s'agit de ce qu'ils pensent, de ce qu'ils font et de ce qu'ils sont capables de faire, et d'en juger par ce qu'ils ont fait.45

Most works of history, the author writes, are full of ideas, but fail to present the real objects by which man can see himself. His Mémoires, on the contrary, will teach by means of concrete examples.

Unfortunately, not all men respond in exactly the same way. There are three basic principles which determine how men respond, La Fare argues. Natural appetite, passion, and reason represent the progressive stages of man's development and explain the motivations of his action. In addition, men are differentiated on the basis of their temperament, their fortune, and their customs. Men who are rich act differently than men who are poor. In fact, each class has its own "esprit." The bourgeois, the laborer, the soldier, the merchant each respond differently to the

45La Fare, Mémoires, 6; see also 47-48.
same phenomenon. Moreover, the customs of a particular group or nation give rise to habits, which influence the behavior of men. Once established, customs change very slowly.46

Thus, it is not easy to comprehend man's nature and his responses, which are the result of a multiplicity of cultural, social, and personal determinants. While difficult, it is nonetheless worthwhile to attempt to discover these motivations. The nature of man explains the causes of historical events. The purpose of history is to delineate the causes of human action, thereby composing a record of human experiences.

Another historian who maintained that the inclinations and interests of men were the essence of history was Lenglet Dufresnoy. To study history is to analyze the motives, opinions, and passions of men. By studying the motivations of historical figures, one can learn to know one's self, for basic desires and responses of men are uniform.47 Similarly, Saint-Evrémond, in his Discours sur les historiens français, argued that the knowledge of men's passions provided the key to understanding the cause of historical events.48

46 Ibid., 7-16.
47 Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, I, 2-3. See also footnote 42 above.
48 Saint-Evrémond, Discours sur les historiens français, in Oeuvres (5 vols.; Amsterdam, 1739), III, 231-32.
It must be emphasized that the bare details of history were not sufficient to provide this tableau of human conduct. Boulainvilliers well understood that the historian needed to delve into the particular circumstances and the personal responses of man in order to understand him:

... croyez-vous ... que l'on soit bien avancé de savoir la date de quelques événements, le nom des princes, de leurs ministres, de leurs généraux et de leurs maîtresses, si l'on ignore d'ailleurs les ressorts de leurs actions, de leur gouvernement, si l'on ne s'instruit du génie de chaque siècle, des opinions, des moeurs, des idées dominantes, ou pour tout dire des passions qui conduisaient les hommes?49

As Boulainvilliers recognized, man cannot be studied apart from his own environment. Many historians writing at this time perceived that men were both responsible for and influenced by the unique cultural climate in which they lived. Increasingly, theorists claimed that historians had to examine the differences as well as the similarities in the human condition.

The differences could be attributed, in part, to the environment. The historian's task was to portray the customs, manners, and spirit of nations. Sorel, in both the Avertissement and the Supplement, emphasized the importance of knowing the culture of the French. His own history of France, he writes, will include information on how one dresses, what language and laws one uses, and what arts

49Quoted in Simon, Henry de Boulainvilliers, 48.
have been practiced, as well as details on the founding of cities, churches, colleges, and the lives of kings.  

Daniel, too, believed that the depiction of *moeurs* was the proper field for the historian:

> La science de l'Historien se fait sentir par les remarques qu'il sème dans sa narration sur les moeurs des Peuples dont il fait l'Histoire. Par ce mot de moeurs, on n'entend pas seulement le génie de la Nation, mais encore les Costumes, les Usages, les Loix, la Jurisprudence, la manière du Gouvernement Civil et Militaire, et autres choses semblables, avec les changements qui y sont arrivés dans la suite des temps.  

Lombard praised Daniel for his description and analysis of the subtle development of the French nation. This was indeed no faint praise, for Lombard demanded of the historian a broad range of capabilities. The historian should analyze the development of the customs of a people, their present and past forms of government, the nature of the magistrature, police and militia, their religion, and their geography. For Lombard, if the historian did not understand development, he could have no appreciation of history.

Theorists contended that the historian should be aware not only of the cultural differences between nations, 

---


52 Lombard, *Comparaison des deux histoires*, 55-56, 84.
but of the evolution of customs within a nation. La Fare stated that the spirit and character of each century of French history was unique. Likewise, Fénélon realized that the customs of a nation evolve during the course of time, and that the good historian must be conscious of these subtleties:

Le point le plus nécessaire et le plus rare pour un historien, est qu'il sache exactement la forme du gouvernement et le détail des moeurs de la nation dont il écrit l'histoire, pour chaque siècle. Un peintre qui ignore ce qu'on nomme il costume ne peint rien avec vérité.... Chaque peuple change souvent pour ses propres moeurs.... Notre nation ne doit point être peinte d'une façon uniforme: elle a eu des changemens continuels....

Saint-Simon also recognized the critical importance of tracing moeurs of the French nation, which he claimed "... serviront de clef à l'intelligence pour leur gouvernement." In his Parallèle, he clearly showed his awareness that customs evolve and change during different reigns.

To help analyze the culture of a people, a good historian will have recourse to auxiliary sciences. Geography, especially, according to Lenglet Dufresnoy, will explain the climate, the fertility, the economic prosperity, and the character and manners of a people. Anticipating Montesquieu, Lenglet Dufresnoy contends that

53 La Fare, Mémoires, 16, 18-20.


55 Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 58; see also 59, 67, 69, 74-82; Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 10; XXVIII, 276, 280.
political leaders will study geography to appreciate the different customs of a people and the resulting differences in their laws. 56

By the eighteenth century, Boulainvilliers understood that the study of the customs of a nation was not only historically rewarding, but politically valuable. By tracing the usages of the French people to their origins, one could discover the principles of common law of the nation, one could examine the changes in law, and the justice of these changes. Moreover, one could discover the principles of government, and thereby determine the national spirit. Since Boulainvilliers believed that there was real value in maintaining the original traditions and "esprit" of the French nation, his study of French customs would serve a national political purpose. From this study, one could then determine which laws should be maintained and what kind of laws should be enacted. 57

By studying the customs and manners of different cultures, theorists learned that the props of history were

56 Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, I, 14, 16; see also 33-35; II, 239-42.

constantly changing. Indeed, men might always be marked by the same passions and virtues, but the ever-changing circumstances often sparked unexpected behavioral responses. While these theorists did not champion a theory of the progress of the human species, they did recognize the mutable nature of history. Actions and events had to be judged in relation to the time and circumstances in which they occurred.

In praising the works of Daniel, Lombard pointed out the variations in historical circumstances:

Comme le même Peuple et la même Nation, change souvent, quoi qu'imperceptiblement, de moeurs, de coutumes, de langage, de génie, cette différence que dans divers siècles, il y a entre les habitans du même Pays, se doit faire sentir dans une bonne Histoire ... 58

Daniel was sensitive to these mutations not only in the writing of the Histoire de France; but in his Histoire militaire as well. He recognized the difficulties involved in judging the military during different periods, because of the variations in arms, discipline, numbers, and organization of troops. 59

Saint-Simon, too, often referred to the unique circumstances which marked a specific period of French history in his Parallèle des trois premiers rois Bourbons.

58 Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 84.
His initial purpose in this work was to compare the reigns of Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV by analyzing their situation at birth, their education, their families, the court and societal situation, the military potential, the customs, and the governments. The difference in "conjunctures," however, were so great that Saint-Simon often indicated the difficulties of drawing a comparison. For example, the question of whether Louis XIII should have appointed a first minister, Saint-Simon contends, necessitated the careful analysis of historical circumstances. (Saint-Simon concludes that the appointment of Richelieu was to Louis XIII's advantage.)

Seventeenth-century theorists could not posit a developmental theory of history, because they perceived no specific teleological plan. Perhaps more significant, however, is that they understood the relative nature of civilizations. The diversity they perceived was not

60 Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 151; see also 147, 305-306.

61 Not all theorists recognized the relativity of cultures. Some of those theorists writing during this period still adhered to the view that past, present, and future revealed the same lessons. This view failed to recognize the significance of cultural diversities. Pierre Le Moyne, for example, claimed that "... a Learned and Judicious Reader may learn to foretell the future by the past ... ." (Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 45.) Likewise, Charles Sorel felt that men could use the examples of the past to fashion their present conduct. See Sorel, De la prudence, 33. Claude-Vincent Chalons did realize that circumstances change, but in the end, he argued, history continually teaches the same
distorted to support any political or moral end. Historians merely exposed the heterogeneous nature of cultures for what it was.

Commentators and historians writing between 1660 and 1720 often bypassed questions of how to write history to examine the question of what to write. In so doing, they emphasized that man was the central figure in the drama of history. Man's actions were to be understood not as a function of final, transcendentental forces, but as a product of his personal psychological motivations. To expose these motivations, the historian had to understand not only the individual, but his culture, and his total environment. History was a tableau not only of human life, but of the society at large. Moreover, since each society was different and mutable, the historian ought not engage in cross-cultural comparisons, but should examine each cultural unit as a separate entity. By means of such statements, these historians clearly foreshadowed the similar views which were expressed by French philosophes. The seventeenth-century theorists acted as a catalyst to the emergence of the spirit of the Enlightenment.

lessons: "'Comme le monde roule sur les mêmes évenements qui varient dans leurs circonstances, mais au fonds sont toujours les mêmes; l'homme public voit dans la fondation, l'accroissement, la conservation, et la chute des états, quelles sont les causes qui ont produit ces differens effets ... ." (Chalons, Histoire de France, I, Preface /iii/.)
The Quest for Truth

From both Lucian and Cicero came the fervent cries for truth, impartiality, moderation, and objectivity. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century theorists mouthed these maxims over and over again. In the words of Lucian, historians devoutly repeated that the historian should adhere to no party and to no country. As Bayle wrote: "'A historian . . . is like Melchizedech, without father, without mother, and without genealogy.' If he is asked: 'Whence art thou?' he must reply: 'I am neither a Frenchman nor a German, neither an Englishman nor a Spaniard, etc.; I am a citizen of the world. I am not in the service of the Emperor, nor in that of the King of France, but only in the service of Truth.'"62 Echoing Cicero, theorists stated the two cardinal principles that the historian should admit no falsity into his discourse, and should withhold no truth. The words served as a kind of code. Through them, the historian distinguished himself from the novelist, the playwright, and the poet, and entered into the historian's clubhouse.

Either these historians did not understand the implications of their statements, or they could not be bothered to engage in the tedium of fact-finding. Some historians even made contradictory statements to the effect

62 Cassirer, Philosophy of the Enlightenment, 209.
that they were more interested in the exposition of history than in the collection of historical materials. They scorned the *erudits* as mere chronologists or annalists, and called them pedants for their quarrels over minutia.

Almost all authors of the *histoire raisonnée* stated that the distinguishing characteristic of their work was the truth which was contained within. Their words are plain—Scipion Dupleix: "L'histoire ne consiste qu'au fidèle rapport de la vérité et variété des événements ... La vérité est plus belle toute nue, sans art et sans fard ... ."63 Daniel: "La première qualité qu'ils demandent dans un Historien, est la sincérité et la vérité ... ."64 Courtilz de Sandras: "... je dirai les choses comme elles sont; ... la sincérité ... fait le Caractere d'un fidelle Historien."65 Limiers: "... un Historien doit aimer à dire la Vérité, et n'avoir aucun sujet de la taire, parce que le moindre mensonge corrompt la nature de l'Histoire, et fait de la Vérité une Fable."66 Jourdan: "... j'ay cherché la verité toute pure, sans

---


64 Daniel, *Histoire de France*, I, Preface, xviii; see also xxiv, xxvii-xxix.


chercher à donner de fausses louanges ... ."67 Rien court: "... on ne peut estre trop circonspect, ny prendre trop de soin, pour faire en sorte qu'elle soit éloignée de la médisance et de la flatterie ... ."68 Saint-Remy: "J'espère néanmoins qu'on ne me reprochera pas le plus grand défaut où puisse tomber un Historien, qui est de ne pas dire la Vérité ... ."69 Saint-Simon: "... tout amour-propre, toute inclination, toute aversion et toute espèce d'intérêt doit disparaître devant la plus petite et la moins importante vérité, qui est l'âme et la justification de toute histoire ... ."70 If we took them at their word, these theorists would appear to appreciate the critical task of the historian.

But words are cheap, and we can tell from the works that followed, that many of these writers had no intention of presenting impartial and well-researched accounts.


68 Rien court, Histoire de la monarchie française, I, Discours, 1; see also 2, 24, 34.

69 Pierre Surirey de Saint Rémy, Memoires d'artillerie (Paris, 1697), Preface [iv-v].

70 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 7. One can find other similar statements in Quincy, Histoire militaire, I, vii; Fénelon, Lettre à l'Académie, ed. Albert Cahen (Paris, 1942), iii; Avrigny, Memoires pour servir a l'histoire universelle de l'Europe depuis 1600 jusqu'en 1716, I, xiii; Dulong, L'Abbe de Saint-Réal, I, 324 (quotes Rapin); Larrey, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxix.
Indeed, some authors like Courtilz de Sandras and Saint-Simon fashioned their prejudices into the themes of their history. They did little original research, and were inconsistent in their use of primary materials. They often distorted their materials to fit the needs of their moral argument. For the most part, these historians were not impartial and disinterested scholars. If they had been, they would have seen little merit in the form of the \textit{histoire raisonnée}—a form which encouraged the writer to superimpose his subjective evaluation onto the facts presented.

Despite the fact that these authors did not scientifically practice the art of research, many seemed to be aware of the difficulties involved. The was the first step to dealing with the hurdles of scholarship. Some of the theorists recognized that the historian had to beware of the subjective pitfalls in acquiring facts.

In the late sixteenth century, La Popelinière stated that it was impossible to relate what had actually happened in the past because of the subjectivity of the sources and the tendency for an historian to record the values of his own age.\footnote{Huppert, \textit{History and Theory}, 1966, 49-50.} The seventeenth-century theorist who developed this view into complete historical skepticism was La Mothe le Vayer. Writing in the 1680's, he pointed out time and again just how little certainty could be found
in history. Subjectivity enters because men are human, he claims:

... ne prendre pas pour des véritéz une bonne partie de ce qu'elle debite, estant necessairement accompagnée des défauts de nostre humanité, qui ne produit rien d'absolument parfait.  

Nationality, personal circumstances, and political involvements prohibit the objectivity, balance, and impartiality of historians. This, of course, does not mean that history should be ignored, for there is excellent instruction to be gained. But both the reader and the writer should be conscious of the arduous problems in determining truth.  

Both Limiers and Riencourt agree that it is virtually impossible to write history devoid of one's personal interests, but authors, they state, should consciously attempt to moderate their prejudices.  

Daniel argued that subjectivity enters only with certain types of facts. He draws a valuable distinction

72François de La Mothe le Vayer, "Du peu de certitude qu'il y a dans l'histoire," Oeuvres, XIII (Paris, 1684), 416.  

73François de La Mothe le Vayer, "Discours de l'histoire, où est examinée celle de Sandoval," Oeuvres, II (Paris, 1684), 144, 146-48, 156, 189, 225, 239-40. A similar view on the limitations of objectivity can be found in Lettres historiques, January, 1692, 8-10. See Chapter III above, footnote 35.  

between the details of history and the circumstances or motives for these facts. The facts are fairly easy to determine—the actual edicts passed, the dates of battles, the names of ministers can be readily ascertained. But to ask for complete "truth" with regard to the intrigues in cabinets; the private deliberations at negotiations, or the discussions at court would be to demand the impossible of the historian. It would be unreasonable to expect the historian to either have access to these materials or to be impartial in reporting them. In the case of these latter materials, Daniel agrees that pyrrhonism may be justified. All these theorists contended that the writer of history was limited in his quest for truth by his personal sentiments and his predispositions.

The fault did not lie entirely with the historian. He, in turn, was limited by the documents, which themselves contained elements of subjectivity. Le Moyne commented about these commonly used sources: "Letters of Princes, Memoirs of Statesmen, Instructions of Ambassadors, are great Succors: But Princes and Statesmen, do not they sometimes prevaricate in their Writings; are their Pens of greater Credit than their Lips? And are not Ambassadors necessitated to deceive . . . . Do Princes commit their Secrets to Gazeteers, and inform them of the Motives for

which they take up Arms?"  

How, then, should the historian deal with documentary evidence? Both Daniel and Limiers, authors of *histoires raisonnées*, agreed that there were specific rules which could serve as guidelines. For one, if there were almost unanimous agreement about a given event by contemporary witnesses, the historian could accept the fact as true. Accounts of primary witnesses were to be given more weight than hearsay, or secondary accounts. If more than one version existed, it was the most probable (or in the classicist's jargon, the *vraisemblable*) which should be accepted. Limiers would even go so far as to try to extract the motivations or spirit of the writer from a document, in order to determine the value of the material. These men clearly perceived the difficulties which emerged from the materials themselves, and tried to formulate rules of good sense to deal with the possible pitfalls.

In the early eighteenth century, Lenglet Dufresnoy addressed himself to the same problem. By then, however, he recognized that general knowledge about both an author and his environment would aid in evaluating the source.

---

76 Le Moyne, *On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History*, 76-77.

He counselled that knowledge about the customs, government, and culture of an author would enable the reader to better understand an author's framework, and therefore, the reader could make a more accurate judgment about the historical source. Knowledge of all the accompanying circumstances would help to determine the likelihood of a reported event. These rules would allow the historian to steer a middle course between pyrrhonism and credulity. When it came down to the final analysis, these commentators were really counselling that the historian use his judgment—that crucial attribute for all authors of the *histoire raisonnée*.

Historians were theoretically and verbally committed to the quest for historical accuracy. Yet one cannot help but express some skepticism with regard to the extent of their commitment. Their works themselves bear no relationship to the serious scholarship of the erudite monastics who were working at the very same time to determine the most accurate historical sources. They lack the commitment of an author like Bayle who tirelessly devoted himself to distinguishing between the true and the false. While superficially adhering to the trappings of scholarship, the authors of *histoires raisonnées* made no sustained effort to utilize the most trustworthy sources. Yet, even in the face of this realization, the statements themselves have

---

some significance. They indicate that historians believed that their justification and value stemmed from the verity of their accounts. In theory, they realized that the exposition of truth comprised the historian's greatest contribution. Whether truth was defined in moral or factual terms was a question which most did not ask. Usually, their moral imperative, however, overshadowed the tedious research into historical details.

The Ideal Historian

Back in the third century A.D., Lucian stated that the historian should have two basic abilities: he should know the facts, and should know how to express them neatly. A total independence of spirit was likewise a great asset. This view, largely sustained by seventeenth-century theorists, reflects a great deal about the philosophy of history. By focusing on what were considered to be the necessary attributes of the historian, I will be summarizing the materials discussed within this chapter.

Most historians accepted the criteria set forth by Lucian. The tasks faced by the historian were multiple. His job was compared to that of the architect, who was both artist and technician. Le Moyne, Daniel, and Menestrier all stressed the dual elements of form and matter in the construction of a historical work. In the words of Daniel:

79Lacroix, L'histoire dans l'antiquité, 240-41.
Quand il s'agit de construire un grand édifice, ce n'est pas assez d'en avoir les matériaux, il faut savoir les mettre en œuvre, et en faire le choix ... Un Historien avec un grand acquis dans l'étude de l'Antiquité et dans la connaissance des Livres, s'il ne sçait pas bien manier et bien disposer sa matière, peut faire une fort méchante Histoire. La composition demande beaucoup d'art et de discernement; on y peut considérer la matière et la forme.80

During the period 1660-1720, some theorists stressed one or the other element to a greater degree. Le Moyne, Sorel, Rapin, and Lombard chose to emphasize the literary abilities needed by a historian, while Riencourt, Saint- Réal, La Fare, and Lenglet Dufresnoy contended that the historian's judgment, intelligence, and experience were of fundamental importance.

Riencourt devoted more attention to the attributes of a good historian than did many other theorists. The historian, he wrote, should have experience, judgment, intelligence, and credibility. He should be equipped with a good memory, and he should be indebted to no one. Preferably, he should have personal experience of the events related. This latter quality would not only make his work more believable, but would enable him to write with a greater literary flair.81

---

80 Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, lvi. This analogy had been drawn previously by La Popelinière. See Huppert, Idea of Perfect History, 147.

Most philosophers of history stressed the form and matter of history equally, and believed that the two functions could be merged. Limiers, for example, stated that the historian had to be knowledgable about a great range of materials, including the customs, the geography, the politics, and the personalities of the nation under study. In addition, his style should be clear, noble, precise and natural.\(82\) For Le Gendre, the historian had to have knowledge of the country under study, including the religion, laws, politics, and customs. He had to have the judgment to analyze the motivations of men, and to probe into their hearts. Finally, he had to have a style which was clear and precise.\(83\) Perhaps Bayle summed up best the multiple attributes of the ideal narrative historian.

History, he wrote,

\[\ldots\text{demande un homme qui ait un grand jugement; un style noble, clair, et serré; une conscience droite, une probité achevée, beaucoup d'excellents matériaux, et l'art de les bien ranger et sur toutes choses la force de résister aux instincts du zèle de religion qui sollicitent à décrire ce qu'on juge faux, et à orner ce qu'on juge véritable.}\(84\)

\(82\) Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, I, Preface, **1.


\(84\) Quoted in Wade, Intellectual Development of Voltaire, 458. For other statements, see Lombard, Comparaisons des deux histoires, 59; Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 422-31; Boulainvilliers, Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement, I, 188.
If the *histoire raisonnée* was a form which fused the art of writing to the materials of scholarship, the historian clearly had to be equal to the task.

**Conclusion: Ties to the Enlightenment**

The real significance of the philosophy of history described above emerges from a comparison with the theorists of the Enlightenment. These eighteenth-century theorists have been credited with a number of major historiographical findings. The theory of progress, the concept of historical relativism, the appreciation of social and cultural history, the rejection of Providence, and the analysis of human psychology have all been ascribed to these "enlightened" thinkers. However, it can be shown that at least in theory, authors of the *histoire raisonnée* either laid the foundations for these perceptions, or actually posited the same arguments during the years ca. 1660-1720.

The theory of progress is considered to be the most significant finding of eighteenth-century historians. Both Voltaire and Montesquieu assumed that while man's nature was unchanging, he could learn to constantly improve his capacity to reason, and could thereby act with ever-increasing wisdom. Implicitly, this argument contained

---

very optimistic possibilities. Wisdom would enable man to understand his environment better, and to control it to his own advantage. The potential for perfection existed: man had only to grasp the opportunities. History, offering lessons of experience, would instruct men of their greatest advantages. Of course, Voltaire never assumed such a simplistic stance. He understood fully the political and cultural impediments to the free exercise of reason. But, ideally, all **philosophes** maintained that a program could be established which would insure the continual progress and development of human society and civilization.

Theorists of the **histoire raisonnée** never actually subscribed to the theory of progress. For this, we would be more likely to find the roots of Enlightenment thought in the battle of the Ancients and Moderns. But some theorists writing during the years 1660-1720 perceived examples of constant change in the tales of history. From one period to another, the historian could detect fluctuations in the habits, the governments, and the customs of societies. From this realization, it was but a small step to a theory of development. While theorists of the **histoire raisonnée** did not link reason and change into a theory of progress, they at least perceived that the world did not stand still, and that history did not reveal the same experiences time and again.

In addition, these theorists argued that the purpose
of history was derived from its didactic end. Like the eighteenth-century authors, they maintained that history was a record of the experience of man. The learning that would take place would add to greater understanding of men and of cultures. While they did not argue that reason would thereby march continually forward along the road to human perfection, they implicitly prepared the way for this view.

To claim that Voltaire founded a new conception of social and cultural history is to deny the philosophy of seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century theorists. Long before Voltaire produced his *Siècle de Louis XIV* or his *Essai sur les moeurs*, theorists of the seventeenth century argued that the study of the spirit of men and of civilizations was more valid than the study of politics and of war. In the foregoing pages, we have shown that theorists from La Fare to Boulainvilliers recognized that each culture had its own "esprit" and each society its unique customs, laws, religions, and government. Their appreciation of the variety of civilizations also revealed that these spokesmen had an understanding of the relativity of cultures. At the same time, however, they believed that the basic character of men remained uniform. To uncover the causes of human action—that is, to analyze the spirit of men—was a basic function of the good historian. Men, of course, had to be studied as a product of their
environments. When Montesquieu wrote that the factors of climate, religion, and laws affected the responses of men, or when Voltaire wrote that his purpose was to portray the spirit of men, they were not advancing a novel conception of history. These aims had been formulated into theory by Daniel, La Fare, Fénelon, Lenglet Dufresnoy, and Boulainvilliers at a much earlier time. The contribution of the Enlightenment writers was to incorporate this philosophy in a general way into their historical narrative. The philosophy itself, though, was generated by theorists of the histoire raisonnée.

Finally, we have also shown that theorists of the period 1660-1720 viewed history in secular terms. Although they all agreed that there was a God who was the Final Cause, this concept did not affect their analysis of historical events. For the most part, either men or circumstances could explain the movement of history. Their purpose, they claimed, was to portray the psychological motivations of men, and to depict the political, social, and cultural circumstances which gave rise to these actions. Providence played no part in this distinctly secular analysis. In fact, many theorists condemned the recounting of miraculous events on the grounds that such details lacked probability.

To be sure, not all theorists of the histoire raisonnée shared this philosophy. Some, as we have shown
above, stressed the literary aspects more than the philosophical ones. Content to echo the ancient dicta that history would provide experience of political and moral truths, they paid little attention to questions of personal analysis, historical development, or cultural differentiation. Yet, these latter ideas were also current, and laid the foundation for the contributions of Enlightenment historians.
CHAPTER VI

L'HISTOIRE RAISONNÉE: THE FORM

Authors of the histoire raisonnée sought, essentially, to blend scientific, moral and literary values into one coherent narrative. Their concern for erudition, their interest in pedagogical digression, and their emphasis on a polished and eloquent style had to be synthesized. The authors attempted to achieve all three goals. But in the hybridization, both the criteria of scientific exactitude and that of literary merit lost some of their excellence. Nonetheless, the end result was to formulate a type of history in which the specific form, scope, and analysis reveal a particular historical consciousness of the authors. In this chapter, I shall describe and analyze the form typical of most histoires raisonnées.

The Exterior Form

The histoire raisonnée was composed of a number of parts which gave some structure to the narrative. Almost all of these narrative histories began with a dedication, usually termed an Epistle. This, it should be
understood, was a political and economic necessity of the patronage system. The three or four page dedication was the device through which the author's patron was eulogized for his generosity, his learning, and ironically, his disinterested love of truth. If the patron were the king (as he often was in panegyric accounts of the reign), the Epistle could be used to introduce the character traits of the king. The dedication of the histoire raisonnée was a formally contrived device through which the author could memorialize his patrons. Lacking all historiographical merit, this introductory section set forth the worst distortions of truth which the reader would meet.¹

¹See, for example, Labbe, Abrégé chronologique: [Saint-Rémy], Mémoires contenant ce qui s'est passé de plus memorable en France, depuis l'établissement de la monarchie jusqu'à présent (The Hague, 1701); Donneau de Vizé, Mémoires; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française; Jourdan, Histoire de France; Marolles, Histoire des roys de France; Claude-Oronce Finé de Brianville, Abrégé méthodique de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1664); Géraud de Condénoy, Histoire de France (2 vols.; Paris, 1685-89); Le Gendre, Histoire de France; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire; Daniel, Histoire de la milice française; Daniel, Histoire de France; Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV; Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV; Quincy, Histoire militaire. Panegyrics of the reign all began with a dedication to the King. See, for example, Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand (Paris, 1699); Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand; Boyer des Roches, Panégyrique de Louis XIV (Paris, 1665); Calièrres, Panégyrique historique; Jean Epistalier, Le parfait monarque, où les augustes caractères et les heroïques vertus de Louis le grand, appliquées à l'histoire
The Preface and Avertissement both served as introductions to the historical text. In these sections, most authors presented their philosophy of history to the reader. Many of them did not have an integrated teleological scheme in view, but they did have specific ideas about the purpose, the form, the scope, the sources, and the truth of history. These ideas, discussed in the previous chapter, do not require repetition here. Although sometimes inconsistent with the treatment of history which followed, these theoretical statements prove that the authors perceived history as a serious and unique discipline.

See, for example, Labbe, Abregé chronologique; Larrey, Histoire de France; St. Rémy, Mémoires; La Faré, Mémoires; Chalons, Histoire de France; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française; Marolles, Histoire des roys de France; Courtitz, Histoire de la guerre de Hollande; Simon de Riencourt, Abregé chronologique de l'histoire de France depuis le commencement de cette monarchie jusques à présent (2 vols.; Paris, 1678); Boulainvilliers, État de la France; Le Gendre, Histoire de France; Louis Le Gendre, Nouvelle histoire de France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusques à la mort de Louis XIII (2 vols.; Paris, 1718); Daniel, Histoire de France; Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV; Quincy, Histoire militaire; Michel Le Vassor, The History of the Reign of Lewis XIII, King of France and Navarre (3 vols.; London, 1700).
Particularly striking is the frequency with which authors asserted their dedication to truth. This, I have suggested, can be related in part to the classicist's adherence to *vraisemblance*. Yet, there are sufficient examples of serious factual analysis within the texts themselves to prove that truth was often valued as much for its own sake, as for its literary end.

Some authors used this introductory section to expose and to argue the subject to be pursued in their work. Michel Le Vassor, for example, Protestant refugee in England, used the introduction of his *History of the reign of Lewis XIII* to present the theme of his work.\(^3\)

Comparing himself to Tacitus, he wrote:

> It is plain, the principal End Tacitus had in view, was to shew by what Means and Degrees Tyranny was entirely established in Rome after the Death of Augustus; And my chief Aim is to shew the Practices after the Death of Henry IV to destroy the little remaining Liberty of France, to oppress the Clergy, the Nobility, and People; in short, to lay the Foundations of an enormous Power, which has struck a Terror into all Europe in our Days.\(^4\)

Isaac de Larrey, also a Protestant, but a far more impartial spokesman, used part of his Preface to explain

---

\(^3\)In his introduction, he also deals with questions relating to his conception of history.

his approach to various historical topics and to give a short summary of the events covered within the text. And Philippe Labbe, the ardent spokesman for chronological exactitude, presented the faults of many well-respected sixteenth-century historians in the preface to his Abrégé chronologique. In short, all historians of the histoire raisonnée perceived the introductory sections as did Pierre Le Moyne—it was a means "... by that he prepares the Mind and Affection of the Reader, and disposes him to a continued and favourable Attention." Whether philosophical or concrete, the Preface and/or Avertissement served as an author's apology in much the same way as it does today.

With all the introductions out of the way, the author was ready to organize and to present his historical data. Since the length of these histories varied from 120 pages to twenty volumes, it is impossible to make generalizations which apply to all of these works. The


6 Included in his analysis were Nicolas Gilles, Jean Chartier, Jean Du Tillet, François de Belle-Forest, Nicolas Vignier, and Claude Fauchet.

7 Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 188.
popular *Histoire abrégé* was divided by reigns, thereby providing logical concrete demarcations. This pattern established the format for many more serious works of history. Shorter works, like *Mémoires* or *Panegyriques* were either organized chronologically without chapters, or were divided logically at the culmination of wars or treaties. The more extensive and formal *histoires raisonnées*, authored by such men as Limiers, Larrey and Pellisson, often had no chapter divisions at all. Largely chronological in structure, dates were cited in the margins, providing the reader with some organization of the material.

Adding to the trappings of organization, and significant for the creation of a unique historical form, were the summary tables of contents and indices which were used in the multi-volume works. These not only provided

---


10 For these scholarly devices, see, for example, Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*; Larrey, *Histoire*
the reader with an overview of the materials, but also enabled the history to be used as a reference tool. Through these tables, a reader could quickly determine where to find data on specific events. Narrative history thereby became a useful source as well as an amusing diversion.

The citation of sources also added to the erudite appearance of these histories. This was a characteristic of the works of Daniel, Limiers, Larrey, Le Gendre, Jourdan, and Cordemoy. The citation of sources was, Daniel claimed, a responsibility of the author to his reader. The reader had a right to know what materials were used so that he could judge the value and validity of the account. As more and more diversified sources were

---

de France; Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV; Daniel, Histoire de France; Daniel, Histoire de la milice française; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française; Cordemoy, Histoire de France; Le Gendre, Histoire de France.

Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, li-llii. Appearing in the Bibliothèque choisie of 1713 was a statement indicating why many authors chose not to cite their sources, Daniel's implication notwithstanding. The author of this piece wrote: "Il y a eu des Auteurs, qui ont évité les citations, de peur que d'un côté l'on ne vit qu'ils copièrent les Livres communs, peu dignes de foi, et peu estimés; et de l'autre qu'il ne prit envie au Lecteur d'examiner quelquefois les citations, pour voir s'ils n'avaient rien ajouté, de leur tête, à leurs narra-
tions." (Volume XXVII [1713], 17). The concern with scholarly sources did exist, even though not all historians wished to be judged for their scholarship.
used and cited, the *histoire raisonnée* increasingly assumed the form of a scientific discipline. In addition to the moralistic embellishments of the author, documents were included as a means to prove the verity of the account. This manner of writing, termed the *histoire autorisée*, was new to seventeenth-century authors, Menestrier claimed. It grew out of the *histoire raisonnée*, and there was a fine line between the two forms of writing. The *histoire autorisée*, Menestrier writes

... n'aimant pas moins la vérité, que les inventions ingénieuses, a trouvé les moyens de les unir en ajoutant aux narrations raisonnées, et figurées les Titres, les Chartes, et les extrait des Chroniques, et des mémoires, qui ont servi à les dresser.\[^{12}\]  

In the case of authors like Daniel, Limiers, Cordemoy, and Larrey, the forms of the *histoire raisonnée* and *histoire autorisée* are often combined in the same works. What is significant is that these authors used and enumerated historical sources in an effort to create a scholarly form to clothe their accounts. The degree to which this erudite facade was upheld in the texts will be discussed below.

For the most part, the *histoire raisonnée* was chronologically organized. Authors without much imagination, such as the Marquis de Sourches, the Marquis

\[^{12}\text{Menestrier, Les divers caractères, 60.}\]
de Quincy, Henri Stuard de Bonair, P. Adrien de
Jourdan, Michel de Marolles, and Henri Philippe de
Limiers, allowed their narrative to assume an annalistic
form, dryly proceeding from year to year, or even from
day to day. Generally, the topics were limited to
military and political events, thereby adding to the
tedium of the account. Dates were often cited in the
margins both to preserve some literary grace, and to pro-
vide easy reference for readers. Yet, despite this cus-
tomary organization, some authors during the period ca.
1660–ca. 1720 began to find that a topical organization
was more appropriate to their aims. Such an approach was
used, for example, by Saint-Simon, in his Parallèle des
trois premiers rois bourbons, by Le Gendre, in his Nouvelle
histoire de France and in part in his Essai de l'histoire,
by Daniel, in his Histoire de la milice française, by
Pellisson, in his Histoire de Louis XIV, and by Richard,
in his Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales.
By means of a topical treatment of materials, authors were
better able to perceive the interrelationships of events,
and to emphasize these connections to their readers.

One of the primary characteristics of the histoire
raisonnée was its ornamentation by the author. This, I
have shown, was the way in which historians became both
moralists and hommes de lettres: they suspended their
narrative to offer instruction of a moral-political nature or to add to the enjoyment of the reader. These diversions, whether in the form of harangues, judgments, analysis, illustrations, or discourse add appreciably to the scope and the interest of the histoire raisonnée.

The harangue, according to the essentially humanist historians Le Moyne and Mézeray, embellished history and made it both more magnificent and more entertaining.\textsuperscript{13} Likewise, in the opinion of Daniel, Limiers, Le Moyne, and Riencourt, diversions which were carefully placed would add to the enjoyment and instruction of the reader.\textsuperscript{14} The judgments about historical materials, often undertaken in the name of moral instruction, created of the histoire

\textsuperscript{13} Evans, L'historien Mézeray, 128; Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 175-76. Le Moyne was more cautious than was Mézeray in the sanction of harangues. For example, Le Moyne argued that harangues should be used in their proper place and form. It was not appropriate to use harangues for description of battles, but they were acceptable for "... Consultations, which are treated of Peace and War, Alliance or League, Abdication or Election of a Prince, Examples of Justice or Clemency, and the like Affairs of great Account ... " (Le Moyne, ibid., 177.) Mézeray, on the other hand, defended this technique along with that of fictitious discourse, for its "'refraîchissement.'" This is yet another indication that Mézeray falls more within the tradition of humanist historiography than the genre of the histoire raisonnée. For Mézeray's defense of the harangue, see Evans, ibid., 128-29.

\textsuperscript{14} Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 183-86; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française, II, 159-60.
raisonnée a genre in which historical materials were evaluated and analyzed.

Despite its seemingly uninteresting form, the histoire raisonnée contained elements of an emerging historical consciousness. Specifically, the author's concern with evidence or sources, his awareness of historical diversity and relativity, his appreciation for historical analysis, and his interest in narrative grace are the distinguishing and meritorious characteristics of the histoire raisonnée. These elements, worthy of greater attention, will be discussed in some detail below.

The Sources

The rejection of falsity was a principle which guided the work of men in many disciplines. Christians, Cartesians, classicists and scientists were all determined to dissuade the credulous from their errors. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that historians of this period were similarly interested in factual accuracy. The work of the antiquarians was familiar to scholars by 1681 when Mabillon's Diplomatics was first published. In 1697 appeared Jean Le Clerc's Ars Critica and Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire historique et critique. All of these authors were praised for their critical approach and their concern

---

for the validation of sources.

Authors of the *histoire raisonnée* also expressed a growing concern with critical analysis. Many times their narrative approach was not consistent with their verbiage, but this merely exemplifies the fact that historical theory was in advance of historical practice. Before describing the ways in which sources were used by authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, it is first necessary to briefly review their ideology.

Père Daniel, authors of the highly regarded *Histoire de France*, often asserted the need to guard against one's own partiality while engaged in research or writing. By 1713, he argued, moreover, that the historian's primary task lay in the careful choice and criticism of source materials. Only if the critical sense were developed could authors ascertain the "truth"—which they so often claimed as their goal.

To reveal their critical abilities, writers of the *histoire raisonnée* delighted especially in criticizing their contemporaries for their inaccuracies or their ignorance. Indicative is the caustic attack on Mézeray,


who wrote, it was maintained, without regard to truth and without the use of sources. Also to be expected was Bayle's attack on the works of Courtitz de Sandras, which were criticized for their chronological errors and factual distortions.

In addition, however, to these fairly obvious distortions, writers found many seemingly sincere historians who had fallen short of their standards for truth.

---

18 See especially, Boulainvilliers' attack, cited in Simon, Henry de Boulainvillier, 58, and Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 51. Mézeray's failure to cite his sources is not indicative of his disinterest in truth, according to his biographer, Evans. Evans admits that Mézeray does not cite sources, but claims that he was very careful to determine the validity of the sources he did use. Mézeray's documents, Evans asserts, comprise twenty-nine volumes in the Bibliothèque Nationale. They include documents from the Chambre des comptes, letters of Charles VI and Charles, duc de Lorraine, as well as letters from Richelieu. For the reign of Charlemagne, he used the chronicle of Gregory of Tours. Amongst the Renaissance historians used were Paul-Emile, Paul Jove, Guicciardini, Fauchet, Vignier, and Duchesne. See Evans, L'historien Mézeray, 101-12. Yet despite this apology by his biographer, Mézeray himself indicated that he preferred to write in a beautiful style rather than to write with complete exactitude. Criticized by contemporaries like Duchesne, Valois, Baluze and DuCange for not applying the sources to which he referred he answered: "L'exactitude qu'on lui demandait ne le servirait qu'au près de bien peu de gens, le desservirait auprès des autre peut-être et sans doute ne lui mériterait pas des éloges proportionnés à ce surcroît de peine." (Quoted in Bourgeois, "Les mémoires et l'histoire," Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française, IV, 667.)

19 Woodbridge, Gatien de Courtitz, sieur du Verger, 21 (fn).
Larrey condemned Varillas for his "... peu de fidélité ...", and Le Gendre maintained that the history of Cordemoy was improperly researched and was laden with fables. Even Daniel—that vocal crusader for factual accuracy and sources analysis—was criticized by Boulainvilliers for his prejudice and by the author of the Bibliothèque choisie for his failure to use sufficient documentary materials. Most vitriolic of all the critics was Lenglet Dufresnoy, who, in his Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, reviewed the works of Riencourt, Limiers, and Bizardière and found them sorely lacking in accuracy.

Any work of history which did not stand up to the critic's concept of accuracy and of source usage was villified for its failures.

---

20. Larrey, Histoire de France, VI, 392. Substantiation of this criticism of Varillas can be found also in Daniel, Histoire de France, Preface, xxv; Adam, Histoire de la littérature française, V, 331-32; Dulong, L'abbé de Saint-Réal, I, 94-95.


24. Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 286; IV, 40, 132.

25. It should be noted that in addition to censoring, some critics praised others for their accuracy. See, for example, Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, IV, 40 (on Marcel), 42 (on Le Gendre), 288-89 (on Larrey); Journal des Savants, LIV (1713), 137 (on Daniel), XXXIX (1708), 58-76 (on Larrey's Histoire d'Angleterre).
In the prefaces to *histoires raisonnées* or in theoretical tracts, many historians of this period expressed the view that all historical sources are tinged with human partiality. The limitations to historical accuracy were well-summarized by La Mothe le Vayer:

... tout excellente et toute prisible qu'elle est, il la faut lire avec cette prudence de ne prendre pas pour des vérités une bonne partie de ce qu'elle débite, étant nécessairement accompagnée des défauts de notre humanité, qui ne produit rien d'absolument parfait.\(^{26}\)

His thoughts were upheld by such diverse historians as Saint-Evrémon, Jean Le Clerc, Michel Le Vassor, Robillard d'Avrigny, Pierre Le Moyne, Simon de Riencourt, Henri Philippe de Limiers, and Lenglet Dufresnoy.\(^{27}\) Some historians, like Daniel, Limiers, and Lenglet Dufresnoy, also discussed methodological ways to discern which sources were most valid.\(^{28}\) But they further recognized that even

\(^{26}\) La Mothe le Vayer, "Du peu de certitude," Oeuvres, XIII, 416.


if precise data were available, the multiplicity of circumstances and the subtle patterns of causation would increase the difficulties of determining the truth of history.

Despite this tinge of pyrrhonism, historians did choose specific types of sources as guides for their own work. In addition to the readily available memoirs and published collections of both documents and personal recollections, historians like Lenglet Dufresnoy, Daniel, and Boulainvilliers called for the use of letters from kings, ministers, ambassadors, and army generals, records of negotiations, peace treaties, declarations of war, and public acts. Charters and diplomas were particularly useful as sources for medieval history, Lenglet Dufresnoy asserted, while Boulainvilliers maintained that charts

29 Such materials provided the major sources for the historical work of Scipion Dupleix. See Bourgeois, Les sources, I, 282-83. Despite his interest in impartiality (Dupleix, Mémoires des Gales, I, 4), he was never very successful because he had little understanding of historical relativity (Bourgeois, "Les mémoires et l'histoire," Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française, 663-65).

30 Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 378; Daniel, Histoire de France, 1, Preface, III-lili; Simon, Henry de Boulainvilliers, 135. See also Lettres historiques (January, 1692), II, and Menestrier, Les divers caractères, 133-35, for other supporting statements.

31 Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 389.
would enable the historian to obtain "... une juste idée du caractère, des moeurs, de chaque siècle, de même que pour apprendre une infinité de détails dont les Histoires n'ont jamais parlé...."\(^{32}\) Lenglet Dufresnoy credited the value of the more partial sources, such as inscriptions, medals, panegyrics, funeral orations, and gazettes for establishing chronology, although he recognized that their factual accuracy was not to be trusted.\(^{33}\)

Abbe DuBos, writing in the decade of the 1730's not only agreed that sources like laws, edicts, and letters were appropriate for history, but believed that poetry, epistles and moral treatises would accurately reveal the customs of men.\(^{34}\)

The *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV* by Limiers is filled with references to source materials. This author


\(^{33}\) Lenglet Dufresnoy, *Méthode pour étudier l'histoire*, I, 70-71; II, 384-85, 397-400. Of the gazettes which are untrustworthy, Lenglet Dufresnoy specifically mentions the *Mercure français*, *Mercure politique*, and *Lettres historiques*. See ibid., I, 70. On the value of the Mercures, Michel Le Vassor wrote the following: "The *Mercure François* is the Gazette of that Time, and must not such, who shall write the History of the present Reign, make use of Gazettes for the Dates of the Events they shall speak of, and several other things? I find in the Mercure François the King's Edicts and Declarations, Arrests of Parliaments, Manifesto's, divers Letters published on the Affairs of those Times, and many other Things of the like Nature; and I think such a Collection as that, is absolutely necessary for writing the History of Lewis XIII." (Le Vassor, *History of the Reign of Lewis XIII*, II, Advertissement 47).

has been condemned as a plagiarist, who merely copied voluminously from other contemporaries. While some of this criticism is justified, it is nonetheless true that Limiers' consistent citation of materials throughout his multi-volume work provides his history with the facade of scholarship. If he copied from others, he also cleverly adapted the materials to his own needs.

Particularly impressive is the diversity of sources utilized by Limiers. Of the printed works cited most frequently, one finds multiple references to the Mémoires of de Retz, de Rochefoucauld, de Joli, de Mr. du Mont, de M. de la Fare (indicated as M.L.M.D.L.F.), and de Chevalier Temple. Other contemporary histories often cited include Michel Le Vassor's Histoire de Louis XIII, Antoine Aubery's Vie de Mazarin and Vie du Cardinal de Richelieu, Gualdo Priorato's Istoria del Minist. del Mazarin, and Giovanni Nani's Histoire de Venice. Of considerable interest is the fact that despite Limiers' obvious Protestant sympathies, and anti-French bias, he cited such panegyric accounts as the Médailles sur le règne de Louis le Grand (prepared by the Academy), Bussy-Rabutin's Histoire en abrégé de Louis


36 See below, pp. 252-54.
le Grand, and Riencourt's *Histoire de la monarchie française*.

In addition to printed memoirs and histories, Limiers also used gazettes, documents, and manuscript sources. The gazettes were Dutch: the *Mercure hollandois* and the *Lettres sur les matières du temps* served him well.37 The documents, used more frequently in his later volumes, include hundreds of letters from ambassadors, intendants, officials, and kings. He also cited extracts of treaties, manuscripts, memoirs, speeches, ordinances, resolutions, declarations, and edicts. These documents were often inserted in full within the text, enabling the reader to make his own judgments on their significance. Intruding conspicuously on the narrative, these materials give the work the appearance of an impartial, erudite account of the reign.

37 Lenglet Dufresnoy claimed that the beginning volumes of Limiers' history were transcribed from the *Mercures de Hollande*. We now know that no such periodical existed: this term referred to all of the periodicals printed in Holland. It is curious that Limiers' own citations indicate more use of the gazettes in the latter volumes of his history.

Such journals as the *Mercure hollandois* were filled with documents which could be cited readily by historians. For example, between pages 18 and 73 of the volume for 1672, over 30 pages are devoted to documents which are usually cited in full. Between these pages, we find the copy of a treaty of mutual assistance and defense between William Frederick (the Elector of Brandenburg) and the Estates-General of Holland, a report made at the Hague by Captain Ysselmuyen of his combat between the British navy and the fleet of Smirna, a declaration of war between the King of England and the Estates-General of the United Provinces, and two ordinances of the King. (*Mercure hollandois* 1672, 18-32, 42-46, 50-58, 67-69, 71-73, respectively.)
Isaac de Larrey, generally regarded as one of the most impartial historians of the period, cited sources in a manner similar to Limiers. The works of Siri, Nani, Scipion Dupleix, Riencourt, de Rochefoucauld, Bussy-Rabutin, Pérefixe and La Fare number prominently amongst the multiple sources used. Manuscript materials, such as the letters of Wicquefort and of Mazarin, letters from the King, and the letters and negotiations of the Comte d'Estrades, are cited separately and testify to this author's interest in primary materials. Like Limiers, Larrey saw the verification of data as one of his functions as an historian.

An historian who examined sources with scrutiny and cited them with care and exactitude was Gabriel Daniel. He consulted original documents from over 1100 volumes in the royal library, and methodically selected those relevant for his work. In his *Histoire de France* (1696-1713), Daniel wrote detailed footnote references, often including exact page and volume numbers where the material could be located. He cited, specifically, such sources as the Archives of the *Maison du Roi*, acts from the *Chambres des* [Bourgeois, *Les sources*, I, 313.]

While other seventeenth-century historians like Limiers, Larrey, Cordemoy and Le Gendre cite sources in their margins, they generally do not cite pages. An exception to this generalization is Limiers, who does cite page references when he is explicitly criticizing his source. The tendency to neglect pagination of sources makes the verification of these sources particularly difficult.
comptes, and lettres patentes of the King. Printed sources included materials from the Mercure François and the memoirs of Bussy-Rabutin, the memoirs of Puiseur, and the histories of Froissart, Brantôme, and Commines. But while Daniel is conspicuous in this period for his erudite narrative, he was not able to study the documents carefully and still produce a lively narrative with a broad scope. Daniel is noteworthy for his critical abilities, but his works do not exhibit the diversity which is characteristic of the histoire raisonnée.

Historians of this genre clearly used varied sources for the construction of their histories. Memoirs, printed contemporary histories, journals, and documentary materials such as letters, edicts, and treaties were among the materials used most often. Many authors of the histoire


41 Bourgeois, Les sources, I, 313-14. In 1755, as a result of the limitations of this work, H. Griffet undertook to broaden the scope and to make this work more complete by adding explanations and notes on law, customs, and governments. He added interesting materials on the early kings, such as explanations and descriptions of tombs, medals, language, religion, and serfs. See Père Daniel Gabriel, Histoire de France depuis l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules (17 vols.; Paris, 1755), I, x-xii.

42 Many historians did not cite their sources, so it is difficult to know where they obtained their information. For some historians, like Saint-Simon and Abbé de Choisy, the sources utilized are known. For the sources used by Saint-Simon, see Chapter II above. See also Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, xxvi-xxxii; Cheruel, Saint-Simon considéré comme historien, 74-85, 157-60; Adam, Histoire de la
raisonnée saw themselves as truthfinders, and despite their own impassioned responses to the events of the reign, they were anxious to prove the validity of their views. This was achieved through the scholarly facade of source citation.

Seventeenth-century historians may well have been interested in the sources of history, but their scholarly instincts did not necessarily include crediting their sources. Plagiarism was not denounced and scorned as dishonest and misrepresentative. The style of authors of the histoire raisonné was often similar, because classical values controlled the vocabulary and construction of the works. In addition, popular phrases and metaphors (such as the depiction of finances as the nerves of the State) appear time and again in these narrative histories, thereby suggesting familiarity with the works of others and widespread adoption of catchy phraseology.

For cases of noticeable plagiarism of materials, Limiers' Histoire de Louis XIV is rich. Since this work was first published in 1717, and the works which contain similar passages predate it, it seems clear that Limiers must be held accountable for the plagiarism. Such passages as this litérature française, V, 336. The materials used by Choisy were largely personal. He was friendly, for example, with Bussy-Rabutin, Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld, Mme. de la Fayette. He supplemented the knowledge obtained from these sources with Dangeau's Journal and personal interviews. See Georges Mongrédiens introduction to Choisy, Mémoires, 14-16, and ibid., 35.
one by Le Gendre on the French financial situation served
Limiers well:

Le plus grand desordre et celui qui pouvoit avoir
de plus funeste consequences etoit le d'reglement
qu'il y avoit dans les Finances. Ce sont les nerfs
de l'Estat: si les nerfs s'affoiblissent, quelle
vigueur peut avoir le Corps?43

The works plagiarized most frequently by Limiers are Louis
Le Gendres Essai de l'histoire du regne de Louis le Grand
(1700), Charles-Auguste de La Fare's Mémoires (1716), the
preface to Daniel's Histoire de France (1696), and the
Médailles sur le règne de Louis le grand (1702).44

Such cases of plagiarism, while not to be ignored,

43Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 29; cf. Limiers,
Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 18. Limiers changed
the word "consequences" to "suites," and "y avoit" to
"trouva."

44Cf., for example, Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire,
28, 33, 54, 56, 57, with Limiers, Histoire du règne de
Louis XIV, III, 45, 39, 106, 107, 108, respectively; La Fare,
Mémoires, 35-36, 165, with Limiers, ibid., III, 40-41,
229-31, respectively; Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface,
xxvii, xxxvi, lx, lxiii, with Limiers, ibid., I,
Preface, **12, **1, **127 respectively; Médailles, 59, with
Limiers, ibid., III, 2. There is at least one example in
which another author plagiarized from Limiers. Quincy's
Histoire militaire, published in 1726, borrows heavily from
Limiers on the subject of the death of the King. Cf.
Quincy, Histoire militaire, 400, with Limiers, ibid., X,
298-301. In the preface to his history, Limiers openly
admitted his tendency to copy. He wrote: "Il... ne pouvant
mieux dire les choses que ces Auteurs les ont dites, on n'a
pas cru mal faire de les copier en quelques endroits.
D'ailleurs... il est certain que l'Histoire n'est autre
 choses qu'une Compilation. Il est encore plus certain que
les Memoires sont faits pour l'Histoire: il ne s'agit donc
plus que de la maniere de s'en servir.... Le Cardinal
de Retz peint si bien les choses qu'il a vuës, qu'on
defigurerait ses tableaux si l'on en changeoit les traits." (Limiers, ibid., I, Preface, **9-*107.)
do not, it seems to me, ruin the value or contribution of the work of Limiers. He often credited these authors in other parts of his work, so he clearly did not seek always to claim the works of others as his own. While representative of sloppy scholarship by twentieth-century standards, this plagiarism does not overshadow the fact that Limiers used other secondary sources and cited them along with manuscripts and documents in his footnotes. Similarly, Larrey's close adaptation of Riencourt's description of the King's majority should not overshadow Larrey's honest citation of sources in most of the work. The effort to appear erudite and to create a scholarly form to clothe the historical data was a more significant characteristic of the work of Limiers and of Larrey than their occasional plagiarism of materials.

Sources were not only cited in the margins, but some authors occasionally discussed the validity of the sources in their narrative. Larrey, for example, in analyzing the composition of the Chambre de justice, described the numbers of men involved, the offices from which they were drawn, the people who presided, and the function of the group. After writing that the Chancellor presided, Larrey adds the footnote: "Selon de Riencourt: mais selon

Bussi c'était le Président de Lamoignon.\textsuperscript{46} His care to note the discrepancy of the sources indicates his sincere concern with historical accuracy.

Larrey was also aware of the partiality of sources. Affirming his own efforts to be objective, he discussed the historiography on the subject of Mazarin, indicating that the first minister was both hated and loved. Larrey claimed that he would take the middle road, following the most impartial historians and those most worthy of trust. Particularly valid, he stated, was the \textit{Histoire de Venise} of Nani.\textsuperscript{47} This passage reveals Larrey's attempt not only to cite sources, but to be critical in his evaluation of the source materials.

Limiers, too, criticized the sources which he believed were partial. One has the impression, however, that Limiers was more interested in condemning laudatory accounts of the reign than in writing the most accurate history possible. Nonetheless, this analysis of the historiography of the Dutch War is valid and well worth quotation. It is indicative of Limiers' method of source analysis and of his style:

\begin{quote}
L'imprudence de ces gens ... a donné occasion aux Historiens François d'exagerer les difficultez de ce passage \textsuperscript{7}; jusques-là que plusieurs d'entre'eux, trompez par la description
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} Larrey, \textit{Histoire de France}, III, 269-70.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}, 235-36.
pompeuse qu'en a fait Mr. Despréaux avec tout le brillant et tout le merveilleux que peut fournir la Poésie, assurent que ce Passage fut regardé comme une des entreprises les plus hardies qui aient jamais été exécutées: et qu'on ne saurait s'imager le bruit que fit dans le monde une Action si hardie et si bien conduite.

X Epître au Roi
x De Riencourt, Hist. de Louis XIV, Tom. I, pag. 316  
† Essai de l'hist. du Regne de Louis le Grand. Liv. III, pag. 103 48

This author occasionally engaged in textual criticism as well. Three documents on the subject of French foreign policy were cited by him as evidence of France's intent to divide the strength of the enemy. Commenting on the documents themselves, Limiers displayed his ability at internal analysis:

S'il faut juger de ces Ecrits par l'uniformité du Stile, des Raisons et du But qu'on y apercevoit, on peut dire qu'ils venoient d'une même main, et qu'ils estoient destinez à défendre une même Cause.49

These limited examples prove that the use and criticism of sources were regarded seriously by many authors of the histoire raisonnée.50 Those who cited sources drew from

48 Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 308-309. Notice also Limiers' condemnation of Boileau's classical, poetical approach to the materials of history. For other analyses of this nature, which likewise criticize panegyric accounts, see Limiers, ibid., I, part 1, 87-88 (a criticism of Riencourt's account of the breaking of Louis XIII's will); ibid., III, 5-11 (an analysis of Bussy-Rabutin's portrait of Louis XIV); ibid., II, part 2, 371 (a criticism of a panegyric of Mazarin).

49 Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, VI, 186. See also ibid., 189-202.

50 For other examples, see Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, II, part 2, 39; III, 104-106, 182-95; V, 25
a great diversity of materials. Historians such as Daniel, Larrey, and Limiers displayed analytical abilities in their choice of historical materials. In the composition of the histoire raisonnée during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, scholarship was becoming an increasingly important factor. 51

51 Before leaving this topic, we must also discuss the seemingly scholarly approach to the origins of the French kingdom. Amongst authors of the histoire raisonnée, this interest was pronounced. Many of them discussed the origins of their nations in the preface or first chapter of their histories of France. Their attention to this matter was one means by which the scope of history was expanded. Furthermore, their treatment of the origins of France reveals something of their critical abilities.

There were primarily four theories on the origins of the French from which seventeenth-century historians could choose. Tacitus (ca. 55-120 A.D.), most often emulated by sixteenth-century historians, claimed that the French were originally descended from Germanic roots. The Germans were descended from Mannus, who had three sons. These sons divided the kingdom into three tribes, and the names of the Franks, Saxons, and Allemans in time emerged from these three groups. Gregory of Tours (539-594) argued that the Franks originated from Pannonia, and after settling for a period of time on the right bank of the Rhine, they crossed over to the left. The three tribes referred to by Tacitus emerge at a later date, according to Gregory of Tours. Another interpretation was that of the chronicler Fregedar. He asserted that the Franks were descended from the Trojans, and that their first king was Priam. After splitting from the Trojans, and wandering for many years, one group chose a king called Francion and took the name of the Franks. The fourth version, by an anonymous writer of the Liber Historiae, speaks of a legendary king Pharamond as the first of the Franks.

It is now believed that the French did, in fact, owe their origins to Germanic roots. There were sometimes temporary alliances formed between essentially warring tribes. Somewhere between the second and fourth century, the Franks, Saxons, and Allemans emerged as distinct
groupings. The first French king for whom a clear reference exists is Clodion, head of the Salian Franks. His reign dates from the fourth century. (For the above information, see John Bagnell Bury, ed., *The Cambridge Medieval History* /Cambridge, 1917/, I, 292-303; II, 110-115.)

Amongst authors of the histoire raisonnée, there were diverse opinions. The historians who subscribed to the currently accepted view were Boulainvilliers, Daniel, Limiers, and DuBos. Both Daniel and Limiers drew an astute distinction between the French nation and the French monarchy. They argued that no accurate material existed on the origins of the nation, but that the monarchy could be traced to Clovis. Boulainvilliers claimed that the French originated with Clovis, but to enhance his own theory, he argued that Clovis was not an absolute king. (DuBos, *Histoire critique*, I, "Discours préliminaire"; Daniel, *Histoire de France*, I, Preface, xxxix-xl, lxii-lxiii, xcvi-xcviii; Père Gabriel Daniel, *Deux dissertations préliminaires pour une nouvelle histoire de France* /Paris, 1696/, II-17, 72-81.) Daniel's comments are remarkable for their critical and textual analysis. Limiers, *Annales*, I, 1-2; Boulainvilliers, *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France*, I, 19, 26, 36, 55.

Some historians blended together the correct belief that the French were descended from the Germans with the assertion that Pharamond was their first king. (See, for example, Le Gendre, *Moeurs et coutumes*, 1-2, 54; Le Gendre, *Histoire de France*, 2-8. This latter work is also noteworthy for the author's pronounced skepticism. See also Jourdan, *Histoire de France*, 1-4, 20; Chalons, *Histoire de France*, I, 1-2; Saint-Rémy, *Mémoires*, Preface /xix-xxi/, 23-25.)

There were still many historians who simply stated that Pharamond was the first king of the Franks. They believed that the historical documents were clear on this issue, and that there was no problem with tracing the development of the kingdom. Amongst these were Labbe, Riencourt, and Bonair. (See Philippe Labbe, *L'histoire des roya de France depuis Faramond jusque au regne de Louis XIV* /Paris, 1667/, I-11; Riencourt, *Histoire de la monarchie française*, I, 1-2; Bonair, *Histoire de France*, Avant-Propôs.)

The intense interest in philology generated by sixteenth-century humanism was reflected in the historian's concern with the meaning of the term "Frank." From the tenth century, it was commonly believed that the Franks were so named because they were able to free themselves from Roman domination. Their assumption was based on the fact that in medieval Latin, the term *francus* meant free. This view is reiterated by many seventeenth-century historians. (See, for example, Guillaume Marcel, *Histoire de
The Narrative

The *histoire raisonnée* was constructed in the form of a narrative which "... a receu divers ornemens de l'esprit et de l'adresse des Historiens ... ."\(^{52}\) The ornamentation of the narrative was one of the chief characteristics of this genre. Rather than detracting from the value of the history, these digressions of a moral and philosophical nature actually contributed to the development of historical writing. For it was only through such digressions that the author was able to move away from a strictly chronological and annalistic approach to history, in which he dryly recorded the details of insignificant events. Through his digressions, he was able to discuss the significance of certain events, he was able to draw parallels to other

\[1\text{'origine et des progr\'es de la monarchie fran\'caise /4 vols.; Paris, 1686/}, \text{I, 11-12; Marolles, Histoire des roys de France, 3; Lenglet Dufresnoy, M\'ethode pour \'etudier l'histoire, II, 243; Daniel, Histoire de France, I, 7. }\]

François Eudes de Mézeray, in Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France /6 vols.; Amsterdam, 1682/}, \text{I, 4-6, and Jourdan, in Histoire de France, } \text{I, 4-6, 10, recognize that there may be other meanings to this term.} \)

In fact, the name of the tribe is actually derived from a Teutonic term, Frankon, meaning javelin, or in Old High German Franko. (See Oxford English Dictionary.\) What is significant is that these historians felt that it was important to diverge from their texts to analyze these terms philologically. Their analyses reveal deep commitment to historical criticism, even though their conclusions have been disproven. (For other valuable philological analyses, see Marolles, Histoire des roys de France, 15; Cordemoy, Histoire de France, I, 65.)

Through these analyses of the origins of the French nation, and the origins of the term Franks, these historians proved themselves to be committed to critical historical research. They saw themselves as scientists and explorers uncovering the myths of the past, and revealing the cultural roots of the French nation.

\(^{52}\) Menestrier, *Les divers caractères*, 38.
historical materials, and he was able to expand his concerns from a tedious listing of facts to an examination of the meaning of these details. Thereby, the author could expand his scope to include discussions of the customs and character of men and of nations, and he could portray the motivations of historical figures. In this way, the authors of the histoire raisonnée almost inconspicuously laid the groundwork for the historians of the Enlightenment, who have been credited with the founding of "cultural" and "social" history.

Whether these authors discussed the reign of Louis XIV in one chapter of an abridged history of France or in a multi-volume work devoted entirely to the "Sun King," whether the work was a panegyric or a denunciation, they all recorded the political and military accomplishments of the reign. This is not to deny, of course, that some historians also tried to discuss the cultural and social aspects of the reign. But, despite some consideration of these matters, the historical data was most often political and military in nature. These historians faithfully recounted the many battles of the reign, the creation of military legions, the deaths and births of royalty, of advisers, and of generals, the outbreak of the Fronde, the king's coronation and majority celebrations, the establishment of academies, the passage of ordinances, the diversions of the Court, the Protestant menace, the diplomatic
negotiations and receptions, and the personal responses of the King. Some historians, as we shall see in the following chapter, also discussed economic matters, popular concerns, and cultural achievements—but these were always in addition to the more traditional materials.

Although writers occasionally presented an overview of a part of the reign, they generally adhered to a chronological organization. When these historians were not using their material for the subject of a philosophic digression—that is, when the data was presented for its own sake—they were capable of impartial historical description. Notice, for example, Le Gendre's almost flat tone in this presentation of his nation's policy of reunions:

Le Traité de Nimegue aient confirmé au Roy la Haute et la Basse Alsace en pleine Souveraineté, il fit sommer, l'année d'apres, tous les Princes, toutes les Villes, et généralement tous les Vassaux qui en relevent, de lui rendre foi et hommage. Quelques-uns obeïrent, beaucoup refusèrent. Sur leur refus le Conseil de Brisac réunit leurs Terres au Domaine suivant la loi des Fiefs, qui permet la confiscation, quand le Vassal néglige, ou qu'il dénie à son Seigneur l'hommage qui lui est dû .... Ces réunions étant regardées par les uns comme des infractions, et par d'autres au contraire comme de pure exécutions de la Paix de Nimegue ...


54 See, for example, Larrey, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xii-xiv; Brienne, Mémoires inédits, I, 326.

55 Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 197-98; see also
Authors of the *histoire raisonnée* were capable of writing in an annalistic narrative form. This kind of narrative had the advantage of simulating disinterest and impartiality. By such unimpassioned descriptions of historical data, authors could appear objective, and could claim that their objectivity gave their works merit and validity.

One of the great dichotomies of the genre of the *histoire raisonnée* centered on this question of objectivity. In some ways, it was clear that the authors wished to appear trustworthy and unbiased. We have seen, for example, that in their prefaces they often claim their impartiality and interest in "truth." The use of sources and the critical analysis of source materials was a way to add credence to their claims. Historians went to great lengths to assert that history was differentiated from literature by its absolute adherence to truth. But at the same time that historians could make these statements and seemingly attempt to carry them out, they also made every effort to convince the reader of the justice of their point of view by discoursing on the meaning and teachings of the objective historical facts. Thereby, they chose most of the time to

ignore their own dicta about objectivity, because they viewed history as a medium for moral and philosophic instruction.

Part of this inconsistency can be explained by the fact that philosophically, the word "truth" had a somewhat different connotation to seventeenth-century minds. When we speak of "truth" in history, we tend to associate this term with objectivity, impartiality, and factual correctness. But to the seventeenth-century mind, "truth" usually referred to some moral imperative or principle which gave the disconnected facts their meaning. Thus, at the same time that the historian could be dedicated to the objective reporting of historical data, he considered it his responsibility to clarify to the reader the significance of this material.

There were some ways in which the historian could assume an objective and uninvolved stance, and still convey a message to his reader. Portraiture was one of these media. By means of a portrait, the character of an individual could be depicted and a moral judgment could be suggested without the author departing from his subject. The histoire raisonné abounds in portraiture of political figures. 56

56 See, for example, the portraits of Colbert in Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 39; that of Mazarin in Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 101-103; that of Henry IV and Louis XIII in Le Gendre, Nouvelle histoire de France, II, 733, 790, respectively. See Chapters VII and IX for further discussions of portraiture.
The depiction of Louis XIV as a classical hero was a standard for all laudatory and panegyric accounts of the reign. Especially revealing is the lengthy portrait of the King by Bussy-Rabutin. The author rarely digresses from his subject, but his moral comment would have been obvious to his readers. Louis' personality is not at all distinctive in this description, but that merely adds to the universality of the portrait. The author begins with a physical description:

Louis XIV du nom est grand, et bien pris dans sa taille. Il a les cheveux chastains bruns et naturellement enflex; les yeux bleus, grands et doux; le nez bien fait; la bouche tres agréable, et le sourire chairmant .... Il a l'air d'un Heros; et quand on ne traieroit pas sa dignité Royale de Majesté, on en devroit traiter sa personne. Il a je ne sçay quel charme dans la voix qui luy achieve de gagner les coeurs que sa presence avoir déjà touchez. Il danse avec une grace et une justesse admirable ....

After this largely nondescript portrait, revealing only the grace and the classic beauty of the King's physique, Bussy-Rabutin continues with a description of Louis' personality and character:

Pour l'esprit, il l'a infiniment juste; il l'a aisé naturel, plein de feu: .... Ni les hommes, ni ses passions ne le gouvernent; la seule raison a tout pouvoir sur luy; .... il ne croit ni les amis ni les ennemis; et cherchant la verité parmi les gens neutres et non suspects, il en compose sa justice .... Il n'a jamais dit une parole fâcheuse à un Gentilhomme, et personne ne l'a vu en colere .... Le Roy est propre et magnifique en ses habits, en ses meubles, en ses chevaux, en ses équipages, en ses bâtimens, enfin en toutes choses; .... Il ayme naturellement la société ....

57Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le
Portrayed as the father of justice, as the embodiment of moderation, as the personification of reason, Louis XIV was viewed as a hero. The vehicle of classicism permitted Bussy-Rabutin to paint the King in this way, without ever having to diverge from the subject matter to moralize.

Another way in which the author of the histoire raisonnée could instruct his reader without departing from his subject was to incorporate an analysis of the facts into his narrative. Isaac de Larrey and Paul Pellisson were particularly adept at this technique. In describing the government of Louis XIV, for example, Larrey depicted Louis' interest in governing, his awareness of the existing injustices to the oppressed peoples, his reform of the judicial system, his reorganization of government to limit the overweening power of the nobility, and his reform of the tax burden. In this way, the King was praised on the basis of his concrete actions, without Larrey ever having to explicitly express approval. 58

Authors of the histoire raisonnée not only analyzed particular historical situations, but they often focused on the motivations of specific individuals. Their increasing interest in motivations and in causation was one indication of a maturing historical consciousness. By investigating and

Grand, 104-110.

58Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 240-42. See also Limiers, Histoire de règne de Louis XIV, VIII, 182-92, 298.
describing the motivations of historical figures, historians were subtly able to show the morality or immorality of their actions. In this way, they could offer their reader moral instruction without blatantly imposing their own values.

These techniques—the painting of portraits, the analysis of facts, and the investigation of motivations—enabled the author to instruct his readers while still assuming an inconspicuous stand. The authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, however, did not seem particularly concerned about remaining invisible to their readers. The idea that the author is merely a technician of the data, divorced from the material, was a concept foreign to the seventeenth-century historian of this genre. On the contrary, he viewed it as his function to comment pointedly on the data, so that the moral impulse of the history would not be lost. Since this was such a marked characteristic of the narrative, it is worthwhile to describe the nature of these digressions.

Seventeenth-century historians writing the history of their own time were bound to have strong views on historical events which had an obvious effect on their own lives. One could hardly expect impartiality on such topics as the Fronde, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the authority of the King. As historians dealt with the events of the reign, they commented either through maxims, digressions, or descriptive phrases which were incorporated into their treatment of the historical materials.
Despite their involvement with the data, some historians maintained a degree of objectivity by presenting both sides of an issue. In this moral analysis of the Fronde, for example, Larrey condemned the destructive aspects of both parties:

Que l'intérêt, et l'amour propre sont de dangereux Séducteurs! et qu'il en coute cher à ceux qui les écoutent! Le Parlement et le Peuple liguez ensemble croient se venger des Partisans, réprimer le pouvoir trop absolu du Ministère, et faire revoguer les Edits: tous leurs efforts ne font qu'augmenter les desordres et ne servent qu'à apasantir le joug.

D'autre côté que le Gouvernement Despotique cause de maux et aux Peuples et à lui-même! 59

Of a similar nature is this philosophic digression by La Fare on the effect of absolute authority. La Fare recognized both the advantages and evils of power:

... cette Autorité absolué, qui fait d'un côté la grandeur et la felicité du Prince, et contribué au maintien de l'Etat, fait souvent d'un autre côté la misere des Peuples, l'aneantissemnt des plus nobles sujets et même de la Nation, à mesure qu'elle affoiblit et énerve ce même Etat. 60

By means of these digressions, the authors of the histoire raisonnée fulfilled their pledge to provide moral instruction.

However, authors' comments were more often political in nature. In these cases, the point of view of the historian was more explicit. Particularly in analyses involving the King himself, there existed a clear contrast between those in

60 La Fare, Mémoires, 40-41.
support of Louis XIV's actions and those condemning his oppression. Panegyrists, as we shall see below, modelled their works after an unhistorical eulogy of the attributes of kingship. Here, for example, is the laudatory description of the King's accomplishments written by Bussy-Rabutin:

Et là-dessus je fais reflexion que la plupart des Grands hommes ne sont Grands que par un endroit; les uns par la Guerre, les autres par la Politique; les uns par les Arts, les autres par les Sciences. Mais on trouve le Roy Grand par tout, en particulier, en général, dans sa Famille, dans ses Conseils, dans ses Bâtimens, à la teste de ces Armées; il agit dans toutes ces choses comme s'il n'estoit né que pour chacune.\footnote{Bussy-Rabutin, \textit{Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand}, 177-78.}

This author has here attempted to combine eulogy with the materials of history. Also typical of the way in which descriptive phrases were used to praise the actions of the king, without actually digressing from the data, is this passage by Riencourt:

\begin{quote}
Le Roy donna des marques de sa piété envers Dieu et ce son affection envers ses Peuples, par deux Ordonnances qu'il fit, la première contre les blasphemateurs, et contre les duelistes ... et la seconde Ordonnance contenoit des défences faites aux laquais de porter les épées sur peine de la vie. (Italics mine.)\footnote{Riencourt, \textit{Histoire de la monarchie française}, II, 35. For other examples lauding the king's actions, see Marolles, \textit{Histoire des roys de France}, 455; Larrey, \textit{Histoire de France}, III, 201; Le Gendre, \textit{Essai de l'histoire}, 54-55, 61, 179-80; Mercure Galant, "Journal Historique" (1715), 41-43; Riencourt, \textit{Abécédaire chronologique}, II, 114 ff., 121, 139; Médailles du règne de Louis le Grand, 59. This last description is copied exactly in Limiers, \textit{Histoire du règne de Louis le Grand}, I, 2, and is closely paraphrased by} \end{quote}
One need only compare these passages with the attack on absolutism by Limiers to see the way in which the historian imparted his own point of view to his material:

... l'épuisement de la France ne servit qu'à ouvrir de nouvelles ressources au Gouvernement, dont la Puissance ne se règle qu'au bon plaisir, tout tourna à son accroissement dans la guerre comme dans la paix. La misère produisit de nouveaux Soldats; les besoins pressans produisirent de nouveaux moïens, pour disposer de tout l'argent des Sujets; et la Puissance appliqua tout à ses vues et à ses desseins, qui ne tendoient qu'à son augmentation. 63

Limier's position was by no means unique. His view was reiterated time and again by authors condemning Louis' overriding ambition to usurp and to dominate. 64 Very often, however, such works earned their authors severe punishment: this was usually a sufficient deterrent to publication.

The controversy which exists to the present day over the rule of Louis XIV had its roots in the historical literature of the seventeenth century. The obligation of

Limiers in Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France sous les regnes de Louis XIII et Louis XIV, Vols. XI-XIII (Amsterdam, 1740), XII, 602-603.

63 Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, VIII, 181. See also ibid., II, part 2, 89; ibid., V, 358; Limiers, Abrégé chronologique, XII, 573-74; XIII, 24-27. Not all of his comments on the reign were negative. For favorable commentary, see Limiers, Annales, 297, 320-21; Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 67, 104, 106, 114.

64 See, for example, L'esprit de la France et les maximes de Louis XIV, découvertes à l'Europe (Cologne, 1688), 6-7, 111-12, 156-67, 231. See also Histoire de la decadence de la France, prouvée par sa conduite (Cologne, 1687); La France démasquée, ou ses irregularitez dans sa conduite, et maximes (The Hague, 1670).
the author of the *histoire raisonnée* was to exercise his judgment, to take a moral stand, and thereby to instruct his readers. Many of the historians of the years 1660-1720 used every opportunity to eulogize Louis XIV as just, pious, moderate, and stately. Others, particularly those writing from abroad or writing anonymously, clearly denounced his absolutism and his desire for glory and military conquest.

The historiography on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes similarly reveals this wide divergence of opinion. The authors of the *histoire raisonnée* made no effort to moderate their own analysis of the sequence of events preceding the revocation. On the contrary, their purpose was to use just such an event for their eloquent moral digressions.

The authors in support of the revocation included, to name a few, Daniel, Riencourt, Bussy-Rabutin, Le Gendre, and the authors of both the *Mercure Galant* and the *Médailles du règne de Louis le Grand*. Their version unfolded as

---

65 See Chapter IX. Such authors included Marolles, La Serre, Jean Racine, Boyer des Roches, François Faure, Claude de Vertron, La Motte le Noble, Mirat de la Tour, Jean Donneau de Vizé, François de Callières, Claude Jourdan, René Richard, Simon de Riencourt, and Bonair.

66 See, for example, La Fare, Mémoires; Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*; Larrey, *Histoire de France*, and the many political pamphlets and journals, such as *L'esprit de la France*, *Histoire de la decadence de la France*, and *La France demasquée*.

67 See, for example, Daniel, *Histoire de France*, X, cxxiv; *Mercure Galant* (October, 1685), 190-238; Riencourt,
follows: the Huguenots, having demolished churches, overturned altars, pillaged and broken holy images, were recognized and protected by Henry IV, in order that peace could be established in France. Henry's decision to grant them the right to exist as an independent religious sect was based on compulsion rather than choice. The sect divided the kingdom politically, and stimulated discord and civil wars within. Louis XIV, motivated by his piety and zeal as a Christian, undertook to unite his kingdom, and to glorify God at the same time. His fatherly tenderness to these misled souls made him first offer sweet inducements to join the true flock. But adamant in their heretical views, they refused rehabilitation, and Louis, firm but just, forced the Huguenots to accept Catholicism or to face exile. The moral involved, wrote Bussy-Rabutin, was that zeal must always be accompanied by prudence:

La manière dont Sa Majesté managea cette grande entreprise par degréz et sans violence, apprend que le zèle dans les meilleurs desseins doit toujours se conduire par la prudence.  

The policy of Louis XIV, such authors concluded, clearly illustrated his wisdom, justice, moderation, and piety. The revocation, then, teaches us how a king should deal with

Histoire de la monarchie Francoise, II, 371, 419-20; Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrege de Louis le Grand, 151, 246; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 214-18; Medailles du règne de Louis le Grand, 209.

68 Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrege de Louis le Grand, 257.
heresy, disobedience, and violence.

From Protestant apologists and sympathizers came a totally different version. Motivated by their love of truth and their commitment to the fidelity of history, Limiers and Larrey wrote, they felt compelled to present the painful facts. The Huguenots, seeking only to live in peace with a free conscience, were denied this basic human right. Louis XIV, motivated by his own quest for absolute power, and convinced by Romanist ecclesiastics, by Madame de Maintenon, and by power-hungry ministers of the righteousness of his position, was determined to strike violently. He harbored this plan for a long time, despite his frequent promises to maintain the privileges of the Huguenots. When the time was ripe, after having subtly encouraged widespread hatred of this sect, Louis used open force. Their towns were attacked, homes demolished, possessions pillaged; they were tortured, imprisoned in black, infected cells, and thrown into convents. In a typical digression, Limiers comments on the barbarity and cruelty of these persecutions unbefitting a true Christian:

Ne semble-ti-il pas ... que nous nous soyons transportez au Siecle des Diocletions et des Maxi-
mens, ou la Barbarie la plus ingenieuse des Tyrans

69 See, for example, Mercure Hollandois (1684), 611-
12; Choisy, Memoires, 141; Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 232, 235; ibid., V, 184-89; Limiers, Annales, 303-304; Limiers, Histoire du regne de Louis XIV, III, 163-64, 166,
169, 170, 214; ibid., V, 156-63.
s'exerçait contre les Chrétiens avec une fureur toujours nouvelle? Peut-on concevoir que ces choses se soient passées sous le Règne et par les Ordres d'un Roi Chrétien et Très Chrétien, et fier du Titre de Fils-Aîné de l'Eglise?

The final lesson to be drawn from this tyranny, was that nothing was gained! The arts languished, commerce fell off, manufactures were transported elsewhere, and the lands of foreigners were enriched by the immigration of French Protestants. "Spécieuse raison d'État," wrote Mabillon, "en vain vous opposâtes à Louis les vues timides de la sagesse humaine ... ."71

In short, authors of the histoire raisonnéé perceived the sequence of events leading up to the revocation as a topic appropriate for the moral instruction of their readers. Whether in favor or in opposition, historians often digressed from the details to comment on the meaning of these events.

There were, of course, other topics which historians exploited for their digressions. The financial ruin of the French kingdom, caused by Louis' military feats and by his courtly excesses, was often the subject of eloquent maxims by Larrey, Limiers, and Saint-Simon.72 The deleterious effect of an over-ambitious foreign policy was a theme

70 Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis le Grand, V, 163. See the similar comment in Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 232.

71 Cited in Thuau, Raison d'état, 369.

argued by La Fare. The disregard for the nobility and the consequent degeneration of the kingdom at the hands of "bourgeois" ministers is a moral made famous by Saint-Simon. Both analyzing and moralizing at the same time, historians of this genre engaged in frequent digressions which gave the histoire raisonnée its name.

The histoire raisonnée was a synthetic form, in which its authors combined an interest in accuracy, a concern for style, and an occupation with "philosophical" reasoning. Through the organization, marginal notations, footnotes, and indices, the histoire raisonnée assumed the shape of a work based on fact and dedicated to its perpetuation. To some degree, this form was more than a facade, as we can see from the authors who went to great lengths to cite their sources and to criticize inaccuracies in the works of others. But this aim, while no doubt sincere, was counterbalanced and often extinguished by the incompatible effort to ornament the text for both its artistic value and its moral instruction. Through their artistic embellishments, the authors sacrificed accuracy for eloquence. Through their moral commentary, the authors often revealed their subjective positions, thereby forfeiting impartiality for doctrine. Sometimes, however, these moral digressions

73 La Fare, Mémoires, 75-77, 183-84, 187-88.
74 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 8; see also Tilley, The Decline of the Age of Louis XIV, 28; Cheruel, Saint-Simon considéré comme historien, 70-71.
enabled historians to partake in an analysis of the historical data. By these moral judgments, the authors were encouraged to group the historical facts into coherent units. They did not value the facts for their own sake, and can be criticized for not appreciating the scientific values of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century érudits. At the same time, however, they should be praised for their efforts to make sense of the facts and to diverge from the deadly approach of the chronologist. Until the histoire raisonnée was born, the cultural and social history of a later period could not follow.
CHAPTER VII

L'HISTOIRE RAISONNEE: ITS SCOPE

To study the literature of any age is to become conscious of the social perceptions of authors of that time. The historian, as well as the novelist, playwright or journalist, unconsciously imparts his own world view in the process of writing his narrative. Especially when the historian writes a contemporary account, he is affected by the values of his era. The historian's environment gives rise to a specific consciousness about his society and the world which the writer then transfers to his historical narrative. 1 The scope of history, in particular, tends to be relative to the time in which the author lives.

In historical literature of the ancients, for example, the issues of immediate importance to their lives—the nature of government and of power, the origins of wars, the character of rulers—had a direct influence on the scope of these works. 2 In addition, the belief in the fates and

1 This point of view is expressed by Maurice Mandelbaum, The Problem of Historical Knowledge: An Answer to Relativism (New York, 1967), 9.

gods, and the adherence to such concepts as cyclical re-
geneneration found their way into the historical work of this era, clearly marking the character of ancient historiography. Similarly, the Renaissance historian, no doubt affected by the widespread interest in the secular world, and the rebirth of a concept of a world community, reflected these developments in his historical narrative.

During the period 1660-1720, historians were again exposed to unique political developments and to new intellectual attitudes. France clearly had emerged as the most formidable power in Europe. With Louis XIV on the throne, the French nation was glorified at every possible opportunity. A distinctly political figure anxious to solidify and expand his power, Louis centralized this authority and control. Any historian treating the history of this period found that it was necessary to focus on the King, for he seemed the very sustenance of the kingdom. Historians therefore were forced, by their societal context, to fashion a clearly political history.

But even in the most traditional accounts of the reign, the expanded political interests of the King compelled the historian to subtly enlarge the scope of his work. Louis, for example, had dramatically changed the structure of government in early 1661. In the effort to eulogize the King's innovations, writers took notice of these new

---

institutions. They lauded the creation of new royal councils and the centralization of authority through the expanded use of intendants; they praised the establishment of hospitals, the construction of roads, the broadened police power; they celebrated the patronage of the arts and the institutional development of royal academies. The result was to broaden the scope of their histories.

The increasing importance of the French Court also affected the writing of history in at least two ways. For one, Court tastes—aristocratic in nature—dominated the style of historical writing. But secondly, as the Court itself became the subject for the focus of the historian, he inadvertently began to compare French customs as they emerged in Court society with those of other nations. From the Court also came the development of the arts: drama, tapestry, painting, poetry, ballet, and architecture were encouraged by the monarch and were often judged by the courtiers. As these matters came under the aegis of the historian, he began to deal with the cultural history of the reign.

As much as the political and social situation affected the writers of history, so also the intellectual milieu had its effect. Seventeenth-century history was not clearly differentiated from seventeenth-century literature. And literature was written to appeal to the upper classes, thereby ignoring or satirizing the bourgeois and peasant
classes,\textsuperscript{4} while adhering to classical rules which rigidly structured the acceptable literary forms. But the literature of the period was marked by other more positive characteristics. Ever since the mid-sixteenth century, French literary men had been involved in the portraiture and analysis of the human being.\textsuperscript{5} Description of the character and actions of men, of their psychological motivations, and of the discrepancies between passion and reason marked both works of history and of literature. Once concerned with human responses, historians began to trace the popular reaction to such political acts as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the arrival of a king in a town, the economic burdens occasioned by another war. Huguenot writers especially grasped the opportunity to reveal the religious suffering, the mass dislocation, and the economic deprivations encountered by their brethren. While certainly not the central concern of their narrative, historians found that their intellectual milieu stimulated a greater concentration on human responses and human portraiture.

Neither can the effect of the Scientific Revolution be ignored. Increasing emphasis was placed on rational analysis of materials, and increasing consideration was given to the cause of events. As this methodology became


\textsuperscript{5}Turnell, \textit{The Classical Moment}, 13-15.
more familiar and popular, historians also came to apply these criteria to their works. They argued that they could make their greatest contribution to knowledge by examining the motivations of events, and by explaining not what had occurred, but why it had. To do this well meant that the historian had to consider a wide variety of stimuli, from geographical and natural causes to distinctly personal and psychological ones. Necessarily the scope of the historian was broadened. His analytical approach to historical materials—a characteristic of the *histoire raisonnée*—changed the focus of his history from a limited chronology of political and military details to a more comprehensive treatment of the major events of the reign.

This is not to suggest that the general tone or structure of a historical work was noticeably changed. The historical narrative still seemed to focus primarily on military and political history. But there were nonetheless the beginnings of a more comprehensive analysis of the fabric of history. Historians of the *histoire raisonnée* had begun to broaden the scope of historical inquiry.

The Concept of Scope

Particularly in their theoretical statements, historians of this genre seemed well aware that history would be more meaningful as it became more complete. Menestrier
commented that history was the witness of all times, and Saint-Simon, at a different time, but of the same inclination, wrote: "... l'histoire comprend tous les événements qui se sont passés dans tous les siècles et dans tous les lieux."  

Nor was this philosophical commitment to a more comprehensive scope more pronounced as the eighteenth century dawned. As early as 1623, Sorel wrote that an author of a history of France should relate the mode of dress, the language and laws, and the style of art and architecture during a particular period, and should also describe the founding of cities, churches, and colleges. By 1700, when Le Gendre's Histoire de France was first published, Sorel's vision of a good national history remained essentially unchanged. The task of the historian, wrote Le Gendre, was to develop...

... une connaissance non pas mediocre, mais profonde, de ce qui regarde la Religion, des Loix de l'Estat, de la Guerre, de la Politique, des mystères du Gouvernement, du genie de la Nation, de ses moeurs, de ses interests.

The exposition of the customs (moeurs), the way of life, and the spirit (esprit) of the French nation were themes which were expressed by many historians during this period, including Fénelon, Cordemoy, Lombard, Saint-Rémy, Daniel, Menestrier, Les divers caractères, 69.

Menestrier, Les divers caractères, 69.

7 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 5.

8 Sorel, Advertissement sur l'histoire, 55.

9 Le Gendre, Histoire de France, I, [vii–ix].
and Saint-Simon. Daniel was explicit in his definition of the term *moeurs*:

> Par ce mot de moeurs, on n'entend pas seulement le génie de la Nation, mais encore les Coutumes, les Usages, les Loix, la Jurisprudence, la maniere du Gouvernement Civil et Militaire, et autres choses semblables, avec les changemens, qui y sont arrivés dans la suite des temps.

Long before the appearance of Voltaire, then, historians recognized the need to move away from the narrowly confined political-military framework of their predecessors. It was the customs and culture of a people that made them distinct and that explained their behavior. Each country had its own laws, religion, customs, and governments which explained its actions. To understand these determinants of a nation's character was also to begin to understand the motives behind human behavior. This was the kernel of history.

It was one thing to cogently state a theoretical ideal of historical writing, and it was quite another matter to actually construct such a history. Historians understood what their approach to history should be long before they were able to make it reality. Nonetheless, there were specific ways in which historians tried to expand the traditional limited scope of national history.

---

10Fénelon, "Lettre à M. Dacier," Oeuvres, VI, 639-40; Cordemoy, Divers traités, 63; Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 55-56; Saint-Rémy, Mémoires, Preface, xii-xiii, xxii; Daniel, Histoire de la milice françoise, I, ii; Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 10.

One logical way to expand the scope of a national history was to examine the interior of the country more closely. This naturally led some historians to a cultural analysis. An historian who early undertook to expand the scope of history in this way was Saint-Evrémond (1613-1703). His historical essays were models of cultural analysis for his time, but unfortunately their subject matter was limited largely to Roman history. In his *Reflexions sur les divers génies du peuple romain*, he traced the génie and esprit of a people, defining specific character traits and revealing their motivations. He presented a theme, instead of tracing a chronology. The Roman people, he claimed, were devoted to liberty and the public well-being. In addition to this total dedication to justice and liberty, their character was marked by a certain harshness, which subtly changed over time:

> Dans les commencemens de la République, le Peuple Romain ... avait quelque chose de farouche. Cette humeur farouche se tourna depuis en austérité. Il se fit ensuite une vertu severe, éloignée de la politesse et de l'agrément, mais opposée à la moindre apparence de corruption.12

By such descriptions as these, Saint-Evrémond revealed his abilities as a cultural historian and provided a useful model for later writers.13

These efforts were continued by Louis Le Gendre in

---


13Ibid., 3-4, 7, 10-13, 26, 43-44.
his introductory essay to the *Histoire de France*, entitled *Moeurs et coutumes des français dans leurs différents temps de la monarchie*. In this work, Le Gendre traced the customs of the French from their earliest times, when he characterized them as "demi-sauvages" to the third race of French kings, after the conquest of Gaul. He explained that the multitude of diverse customs which existed in different villages resulted from the power of the seigneur of each village who was both its law and its judge. Barbarism, debauchery, and luxury marked the successive stages of the French monarchy, according to Le Gendre. This in large measure explains the history of the French monarchy: the customs of the people influence their type of government, their laws, and their priorities.14

While they provided excellent models of cultural histories, neither Saint-Evremond nor Le Gendre attempted to construct a history in which they analyzed the culture of their own day. It was not until Saint-Simon wrote his *Parallèle des trois premiers rois Bourbons* that a good contemporary analysis existed of the first three Bourbons. In comparing both the historical circumstances and the personal traits of Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV, Saint-Simon considered their respective educations, ages, and positions when they assumed leadership, he analyzed their military

virtues, governments, personal family relationships, and he exposed their faults, their virtues, their customs, and their way of life. He was conscious of the fact that comparisons were indeed difficult, since each period was marked by unique "conjonctures." Nevertheless, both the motivations and the differences between the three kings could be explained by tracing their backgrounds. Such factors as education, the early youth, and the state of the family and the kingdom during the early years of the kings provided

... la clef de tout ce qui suit ces premiers temps, et le juste directoire qui les fait parcourir avec une lumière qui découvre la source des différentes conduites et qui les apprécie avec fondement, justesse et vérité.

Saint-Simon demonstrated his ability to broaden the scope of history especially well when he examined the moeurs of the three kings. The greatest weakness of Henry IV was his penchant for women: this ruined both his own life and his kingdom. Louis XIII, on the other hand, emerged as Saint-Simon's real hero. Equal to Henry in his military virtues, Louis clearly surpassed him in his personal habits. Above all, Louis XIII appreciated what was most dear to Saint-Simon—the respect for nobility.

15Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 392. Notice the similarity between the work of Saint-Simon and Plutarch, who also wrote a Parallel Lives of kings. See Chapter II above,

16Ibid., 379, 104, 52.

17Ibid., 293.
Neither his father nor his son, Saint-Simon continued, could be compared to him in this respect. In fact, Louis XIV reflected some of the traits of his grandfather, particularly with regard to his love of women. Louis XIV was an egotist, granting his family no credit for the well-being of his kingdom, dissipating funds on royal buildings which exhibited nothing but his bad taste, and constantly seeking to increase his own authority. His personality was marked by "... une vanité qui porta l'orgueil au comble, qui s'estendit sur tout, qui le persuada que nul ne l'approchoit en vertus militaires, en projets, en gouvernement ... surtout une jalousie d'autorité ... qui surnagea sur toute autre espèce de justice, de raison et de considération quelconque."19 Despite this devastating portrait of an individual's pride, Saint-Simon admitted that Louis had some compensating qualities of greatness. A sense of majesty, a kindness, and a natural justice marked his actions. The customs and personalities of the three Bourbons required this kind of comparative analysis because, according to Saint-Simon, their way of life provided the key to an

18 Ibid., 74-75.
19 Ibid., 84-85.
understanding of their government. In this way, Saint-Simon effectively expanded the scope of national history. 20

Cultural history—that is, the history of the customs, habits, and way of life of a people—was one means to expand the traditional scope of a narrative history. It was suggested that any auxiliary disciplines which enabled the historian to better understand the human situation—whether geography, genealogy, or theology—should be cultivated and incorporated into the narrative of history. 21

But there were other equally valid approaches, through which the narrow framework of the political-military historian was undermined. One could, for example, emulate the social and institutional analysis which Boulainvilliers found so rewarding for all of his historical work. Or the historian could follow the path of the memorialist, focusing on a few individuals, but developing their character through the depiction of many particular and personal traits. To describe the spirit and character of an important political figure necessitated an appreciation of the cultural history of that era. While limiting in one respect by focusing on an individual, memoirs of such historians as Choisy, Saint-Simon, and Brienne often captured the essence of a personality.

20 Ibid., 58-88.

21 One of the most articulate spokesmen for the inter-disciplinary training of the historian was Lenglet Dufresnoy. See Wade, Intellectual Development of Voltaire, 461-64; Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, I, 4-16.
These writers thereby were better equipped to describe the motivations, to depict the customs, and to understand the causal chain of events than was the chronologist.\textsuperscript{22}

For all the historians discussed so far, the scope of history was focused within the boundaries of the country. There were, however, some historians who felt that one had to look outside of the borders in order to portray the reign of Louis XIV accurately. The three historians who best expressed this point of view, Michel Le Vassor, Henri P. de Limiers, and Isaac Larrey, were all Protestants, and all maintained close ties with the Protestant countries of England and Holland. Therefore, their cosmopolitan view of national history is neither accidental nor surprising. The political interrelationships of all of Western Europe had to be recognized, wrote Le Vassor:

\ldots the Affairs of all Christian Princes have so great a Relation to each other, they make so many Leagues and Alliances together; some for their own Greatness; others to defend themselves from their ambitious Neighbours, that it is impossible to write the History of Germany, France, Spain, or England, without speaking at the same time of what passes in the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{23}

For this reason, neither Larrey nor Limiers neglected to mention the national events in other countries which might affect the French nation, the diplomatic encounters of the


European community, and the cultural dissimilarities which seemed significant. In their view, another useful way to broaden the scope of history was to be conscious of the various entanglements of one nation with another, and to discuss foreign policy and diplomacy as a consequence of a myriad of domestic and external pressures.

Despite these various schemes for new historical formats, most historians of the period 1660-1720 maintained the framework of the political history. While theoretically they understood the values of composing a cultural history, they did not seem able to break out of the established pattern of historical writing. However, within this traditional framework, they expanded the scope of their narrative so that they treated many of the concerns of the cultural, social, and institutional historians of the following century. They examined the court and other local and national institutions, they explored the state of French finances and related this to the responses of the populace, they depicted the arts and cultural interests of Louis XIV, and they analyzed the personality and motivations of major historical figures. A more concrete description of these developments will be the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

The Expansion of Political History

Louis XIV's goal was to centralize the administration of the French monarchy in such a way that he would be able to oversee and rule the entire kingdom. As he worked to extirpate heresy, to expand the borders of the nation, to undermine the strength of the nobility, to encourage the arts, he necessarily broadened the base of political power within his realm. This, in turn, expanded the vision of the historian writing an account of the reign.

This was particularly true with respect to the Court. The Court provided, in a real sense, the stage setting for the King and served to highlight the trappings of monarchy. The emphasis on court history was especially pronounced at the hands of the memorialists, for whom the Court was their very existence. La Fare, for example, in his Mémoires, concentrates both on the court life of the period and on specific military events of which he had some personal experience. In discussing the history of the period, La Fare is quick to reveal the changes which took place at Court and in the country as a result of specific royal decisions or natural events. In some of these analyses, La Fare gravitates towards a cultural history, since he sometimes describes changes in the customs of the Court. Notice, for example, this analysis of the effect of the death of Anne of Austria:
La mort d'Anne d'Autriche, Mère du Rou, n'apporta aucun changement aux affaires, dont elle ne se mêloît plus; mais elle en fit en grand dans la Cour, qui dès ce jour-là commença à changer de Face. Cette Princesse, qui avoit connu tout le monde, et en avait eu besoin, scavoit parfaitement la naissance, et le merite de chacun, et se plaisoit à les distinguer, fière et polie en même temps, elle scavoit ce qui s'appelle tenir une Cour... Du jour de la mort de la Reine Mère il Louis passa presque toute sa vie à la Campagne, l'Urbanité et la Politesse des Villes se retira peu à peu de la Cour, à quoi deux choses contribuèrent beaucoup: l'une que le Roi ne voulut ni n'eût faire la distinction qu'il convient de faire des Hommes; l'autre qu'ayant une humeur naturellement pedante et austère, il mit insensiblement les Femmes sur le pied de n'oser parler aux Hommes en public: Sans les rendre plus sages, il les rendit plus impolies...

Similarly, the Marquis de Sourches, in his thirteen-volume Mémoires, devotes considerable attention to the Court and its customs. Sourches describes such events as the meeting of the doge of Genoa with Louis XIV, which includes a discussion of the significance of the raising and lowering of one's hat. He also writes a long description of the king's cavalcade and line of march, including details on the persons involved, their place of march and their dress. But, unlike the Mémoires of La Fare, these depictions of the customs of the French clearly stem from Sourches' conception of kingship, and reflect the formalism of the times.

Saint-Simon is generally regarded as the best-known

25 La Fare, Mémoires, 58-60.
26 Sourches, Mémoires, I, 219-22 (15 May 1685).
27 Ibid., 228-49.
contemporary historian of Louis XIV's Court. His characterizations of courtiers have become classic examples of psychological portraiture in which the author reveals the most immediate and often egocentric motivations of the subject. These characterizations are usually perceptive, and often biting satirical, but they are also partial. Concentrating primarily on court scenes, Saint-Simon was not able to see beyond what now appear as petty motivations of individual courtiers.\(^2^8\) His history of the reign therefore becomes more a depiction of personalities than an analysis of the customs of the Court.

Historians also, as well as memorialists, expanded the scope of political history by focusing on the Court.\(^2^9\) In a manner reminiscent of La Bruyère's moral outrage at the hypocrisy of the French Court, Limiers describes Madame de Maintenon's effect on the Court:

La Dévotion, dont Madame de Maintenon se piquoit, fit chacun prit ce Caractère. Mais au lieu de la véritable, on en affecta une fausse, et il n'y eut plus de différence entre être Courtisan ou Dévot. À l'abri de ce masque de Piété, on n'en étoit pas plus réglé, on affectoit seulement de la paroître, en l'on en avoit tout le mérite, pourvu qu'on en eût le dehors.\(^3^0\)

\(^2^8\) Cheruel, Saint-Simon considéré comme historien, 71.

\(^2^9\) See below, pp. 305-307, for a description of Brienne's, Le Gendre's, and La Fare's use of the court to introduce the cultural history of the period.

\(^3^0\) Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, V, 193.
Of course, Limiers wrote such a description because of his own contempt of Louis' religious policies and practices. His purpose, then, was not to describe the customs of the Court with regard to religious matters, but to condemn French religiosity. Nonetheless, the net effect is to provide us with a moral comment on French culture, and to expand the scope of political history. For all the historians discussed above, the central position of Louis XIV's Court necessitated a discussion of Court history, and thereby allowed them to carve out new topics for their histories.

Just as the Court received new emphasis at the hands of historians, so also was the economic situation of the kingdom the subject of greater attention. During the first twenty years of his personal reign, Louis made sincere efforts, with the indispensable aid of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, to institute new and far-reaching mercantile reforms which would develop the manufactures and commerce of the country. The creation of these programs was hailed by Louis' supporters as an indication of his interest in the well-being of the French people and his far-minded reform policy. But the subsequent neglect of these programs for a policy of military aggression, requiring heavy tax burdens on the people, was similarly a subject of great interest to his

31 See also Limiers, *Abrégé chronologique*, XIII, 534-35.
critics. The political priorities of the reign gave rise to a new and wider consciousness of historians.

Isaac Larrey, Protestant author of the nine-volume *Histoire de France*, refers to the economic policies of France throughout his narrative. After the dissipation of finances during the Regency, he writes, Colbert undertook to re-establish economic order. Both by remedying the abuses of the money-hungry financiers, and by establishing commerce and manufactures, "... les principales sources de l'abondance et des richesses d'un Etat," Colbert was able to make the kingdom flourish. Larrey is particularly conscious of the relationship between economic prosperity and popular support--one reason why he considers the economy of a kingdom so significant. He writes that the reformation of finances was an

... Ouvrage veritablement digne d'un Roi, qui veut rendre son Gouvernement egallement heureux et florissant, puisque ce point est le plus important de tous, ... le point par lequel on fait tout, sans lequel on ne saurait rien faire, et d'où dépend le soulagement ou l'accablement des Peuples, et tous les bons ou les mauvais succès des desseins et des entreprises.

Limiers also recognizes the integral connection between these two factors, claiming that the economic deprivation of

---

33 Ibid., III, 268-69; see also 341-44, 381-86.
34 Ibid., III, 269. The section underlined in this citation is a quotation from Péréfixe. It appears in italics in the original.
the kingdom resulted in widespread misery amongst the populace. He shows some knowledge of financial matters by his fairly detailed descriptions of the rarity of coins, the default of payments, the usury on money bills, and the lack of confidence in the King's actions. After discussing the appointment of Desmaretz as Controller-General in 1708, Limiers diverges from his text, in the manner of the *histoire raisonnée*, to moralize on the financial degeneracy of the French kingdom:

Ne peut-on pas dire même que le remède fut pire que le mal? puisque ce nouvel arrangement des Finances ne se put faire qu'accablant les Peuples de nouveau, et que pour avoir quelqu'argent comptant, il fallut contracter de nouvelles dettes. Triste ressource! qui agrava les maux au lieu de les soulager ... 

In essential agreement with Limiers was Le Gendre, who despite his basically laudatory history of the reign, was critical of the economic weaknesses of the kingdom. The finances, he wrote, acted as the nerves of the entire system. If they weakened, what vigor would remain in the body?

Saint-Simon was particularly critical of the economic languor brought on by the policies of Louis XIV. While he did not reiterate this failure often, it is clear that he considered the economic weaknesses an essential cause for

---

37 Le Gendre, *Essai de l'histoire*, 29; see also 30, 33, 293.
the failure of the entire reign. Like Limiers, he associated the economic deterioration with the popular misery:

L'extinction du commerce, la dépopulation du Royaume, la misère extrême des peuples et d'une immensité de particuliers, le poids des dettes qui absorbe jusqu'aux moyens de subsister au payement des intérêts, furent les fruits d'un gouvernement de cinquante-cinq ans depuis la mort du cardinal Mazarin ... .38

Through the above examples, we see that economics and financial affairs came within the scope of the histoire raisonnée. Economic policy was a crucial aspect of Louis XIV's reign, and the historians of the period found a way to reveal this in the context of their histories.

It has also been shown above how Louis' economic policies were discussed along with the popular responses which they occasioned. In the most traditional histories of the seventeenth century—as well as in the panegyrics—there was no room for an analysis of popular opinion. In fact it was argued that actions or events lacking nobility should be excluded from the historical narrative, since they did not help to elevate the spirit of the reader.39 Historians dependant on the aristocracy for patronage were generally compelled to mold narrowly classical works.

Nonetheless, there were other available models for open-minded historians. The aristocratic point of view had

38Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 348.

39Le Moyne, On the Art both of Writing and Judging of History, 105, 140; see also Chapters I and IV above.
been rejected in the seventeenth century by such spokesmen as Saint-Réal, Mézeray, and Sorel who believed that the history of the common man was an essential part of a national history. But the historian of the period 1660-1720 who most developed this brand of "popular" history was Henri Philippe de Limiers.

Having lived his entire life in Holland, Limiers adhered to the belief that no form of government could survive without the support of the people. This was one very important reason why he found it valuable to depict popular feeling within his history. In addition, however, Limiers referred to the populace as a means to criticize the reign. In this way, he could both indicate the essential weakness of the French nation-state and he could point out the absolutist tendencies of the French King.

In the early volumes of his *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, Limiers described the custom of people lining the streets in support of their king for a royal occasion such as the sacre du roi. This, he argued, proved that sovereigns were established only by the consent of the people. The sovereign therefore had a responsibility for the well-being of his people, which Louis clearly fulfilled when he provided

---


wheat to his starving population, or when he temporarily reduced their tax burden.\textsuperscript{42} But such examples can never overshadow the popular misery occasioned by Louis' relentless quest for power and war. Notice, for example, how Limiers described the effect of France's preparations for the War of the Spanish Succession:

Les préparatifs de part et d'autre pour une Guerre, qui manœuvrë l'Europe entière, jetèrent la Consternation parmi les Peuples; mais ceux de France, eurent d'autant plus de sujet de s'en allarmer ... . La dernière Paix leur avoir elle causé peu de moïe ... . À peine avaient-ils eu le temps de respirer, et de gouter les douceurs de la tranquillité; puisqu'ils s'étoient vus obligëz de paier les mêmes Impôts, les mêmes Charges, et les mêmes Subsides.\textsuperscript{43}

The people of France, he claimed, received no other benefit from war than the general weakening of the kingdom. There was no need, Limiers wrote, for such a rich country to go to war in order to keep her people happy.\textsuperscript{44} War required money, and the need for money led to the increasing tax burden—"moien ruineux pour les Peuples."\textsuperscript{45} The success or failure of Louis' political ambitions could not be discussed independently of their effect on the people. As a result of this philosophical position, Limiers clearly expanded

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., III, 67, 114.
\textsuperscript{43}Henri Philippe de Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, Roi de France et de Navarre (7 vols. in 14; Amsterdam, 1717), V, 387.
\textsuperscript{44}Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, VIII, 6.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 283; se also ibid., X, 140-41. Boulainvilliers was another historian writing in this framework. See Etat de la France, I, 36-40.
\end{footnotesize}
the scope of the *histoire raisonnée*. While panegyrists often referred to Louis' fatherly care of his people, they approached this as an attribute of kingship, rather than as a reflection of popular will. In his history, Limiers changed the focus of such matters so that the reader could see the causal relationship between the people and the survival of the kingdom.

If the panegyrists of the reign did not expand the scope of history to include the *bourgeoisie*, they did devote considerable attention to the development of the arts within the kingdom. Once again, this was a result of their efforts to laud the King who in a very conscious way had made himself the chief patron of artistic activity in France. By the establishment of academies, by the construction of monuments, by the patronage of letters, music, and art, Louis brought fame and glory to the French kingdom without the accompanying devastation of war. At the hands of such panegyrists as Callières, René Richard, and Le Gendre, these

---

46 Panegyrists always claimed that the populace owed complete obedience to the king who would reciprocate by caring for their needs. They further claimed that Louis did have a sincere interest in the well-being of his people. See, for example, Riencourt, *Histoire de la monarchie française*, I, Preface [vi], II, 121, 139; Daniel, *Histoire de France*, I, Preface, v; Cordemoy, *Divers traités*, 72-74; Jourdan, *Histoire de France*, I, 22; Callières, *Panégyrique historique*, 97, 104-106; Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand*, 152; Larrey, although not a panegyrist, copies their analysis in at least one instance. See his *Histoire de France*, II, 504-505.
activities received unrestrained commendation. This description by Le Gendre is a typical illustration of the treatment of French cultural affairs by Louis' supporters:

Les Sciences et les Arts fleurirent plus que jamais sous un Prince, qui a du goût, et qui prenoit plaisir à combler de biens et d'honneurs les hommes rares et excellens ... il forma de ces Etrangers et des Français les plus habiles, des Academies de Sciences, de Peinture, de Sculpture, d'Architecture et de Musique, où ces grands Maîtres et leurs Élèves s'efforcerent ... d'arriver à la perfection.

While the panegyrists of the reign placed great emphasis on these accomplishments, other historians also found it necessary to acknowledge Louis' efforts in these directions. Even Larrey and Limiers took note of France's achievements, and praised the King for his part in them.

Thus, authors of the histoire raisonnée found at least four channels to expand the scope of their narratives. Still maintaining the form of political-military history, historians found that the nature of the reign of Louis XIV enticed them into new territory. The activities of the Court, the functioning of the economy, the responses of the

47 See, for example, Callières, Panegyrique historique, 57-59, 69, 71, 74, 76; René Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, et des établissements faits sous le regne de Louis le Grand, en faveur de la religion, de la justice, des sciences, des beaux arts, de la guerre, et du commerce (Paris, 1695), 24-25, 62-64, 80, 83; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 58-60.

48 Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 58-59.

populace, and the developments in the arts were brought within the domain of these histories. Thereby, the scope and conception of a political history became more pliable and elastic to fit the circumstances of the reign of Louis XIV.

Institutional and Cultural History

To define the term "cultural" or "institutional" history is to define an approach to historical data more than to define the nature of the materials included in a given work. The political histories of the reign of Louis XIV described above may, in fact, include materials on the culture of the French people, or the new institutions established by the King, but they are called "political" histories because the major focus of the work revolves about the political aspects of the reign. These histories may well include elements of a cultural or institutional history, but they are not defined in these terms.

Even though most authors of the period 1660-1720 wrote political histories, many of them included analytical passages within their works which introduce the techniques of a later period of historical writing. It is not without reason that Voltaire looked to the works of Limiers and Larrey as models for the construction of his Siècle. These earlier works contain the seeds for the cultural,
social, and institutional histories developed by eighteenth-century historians. By their analyses, these historians subtly broadened the scope of history.

Other historians of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, like Louis Le Gendre and Henri de Boulainvilliers, actually constructed their works in the form of cultural or institutional histories. They created a new type of historical narrative with its own themes and aims. By their emphasis and analysis, they not only expanded the scope of history, but changed its direction. Thereby, they contributed significantly to the development of historiography.

In the course of writing their histories, some authors traced the development of specific institutions of the reign. For example, René Richard, in his *Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales* (1695), commemorated Louis' reign by focusing on the "fondations" (or institutions) most worthy of the King. By describing the restructuring of royal councils, the creation of various academies, the growth of the intendant system--the innovations of the reign--the King's extoller inadvertently constructed an early form of an institutional history.

The many military histories written during this period trace the growth of a specific institution over the course of time. Both Père Daniel's *Histoire de la milice française* (1721) and Saint-Rémy's *Histoire d'artillerie*
(1697) analyze the military as an institution which had a pronounced effect on the well-being of the French kingdom. These historians organize their works topically, discussing, for example, the innovations in armaments, the organization of the armed forces, and the development of specific positions of command. By so doing, they constructed institutional histories of the French army.

The person of this period to write the most sophisticated institutional history was Boulainvilliers. As an apologist for the parliamentary nobility, Boulainvilliers used every opportunity to support the growth of parliamentary institutions at the expense of monarchical ones. In all his works, Boulainvilliers appears very interested in the origins of the French monarchy; whenever he can show cause for the limitation of monarchical power, he is happy to do so. In his *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France* and his *Etat de la France*, both published in 1727, Boulainvilliers constructs institutional analyses of the French nation.

His purpose, he tells us, is to trace French customs to their origins, to discover the roots of the common laws and rights of the nation, and to analyze the justice of the changes which have transpired.51 His belief was that through the study of institutions, a national spirit could be

identified. Once this knowledge of the French character was isolated, intelligent political decisions and evaluations could be drawn. The author explains that in correcting the various reports of the intendants and in adding relevant information for the preparation of his *Etat de la France*, a prodigious knowledge of history was necessary:

... non-seulement des Provinces, mais des Eglises Episcopales, des Abbayes, des grandes terres; la connaissance de la Noblesse, de ses différents degrés, de son antiquité et nouveauté, de ses possessions, de ses emplois présents ou passés; connaissance de toute la Magistrature de la France ... ; connaissance des emplois militaires et politiques; connaissance de tous les revenus particuliers, des Nobles ou des Eclesiastiques ... ; connaissance de tout ce qu'on nomme les droits du Roi ... ; connaissance de la marine, du commerce ... des manufactures propres à chaque pays ... etc. 52

The categories mentioned in the above citation reveal Boulainvillier's tendency to think in institutional terms. By examining these institutions and by tracing them to their origins, Boulainvilliers necessarily expanded the scope of historical writing.

Later in the eighteenth century (1735), his work was continued and surpassed by Abbé DuBos, who has been called the first constitutional historian of France. 53 In his *Histoire critique*, he too traces the history of the French monarchy from its roots in the fifth century, paying special

attention to the varied tribes, revenues, assemblies, and laws of the French people. It must be remembered, however, that DuBos found his models amongst historians of an earlier period. If not for them, his work could not have been composed at that time.  

Much more significant than these attempts at institutional history was the genesis of cultural history by authors of the *histoire raisonnée* during the years 1660-1720. Many historians ventured unintentionally into cultural history as a natural concomitant of writing the history of the reign of Louis XIV. The prominence of the Court, for example, required historians to discuss its functions and character. The ruinous luxury, the sumptuous magnificence, and the artistic festivals were depicted by such writers as Le Gendre and Brienne.  

Limiers, a historian without easy

54 Other historians interested in institutional history include Sorel and Lenglet Dufresnoy. See Sorel, *Supplement des traités*, 65, in which the author states his interest in tracing the history of a specific province, and Lenglet Dufresnoy, *Méthode pour étudier l'histoire*, II, 112-28, in which the author analyses the origins of the German Empire through its institutions. Another good example of an author who tried to incorporate an institutional analyses in historical writing was Saint-Simon. Describing the growth of the intendant system, he writes: "'Il s’en servirent peu à peu à balancer, puis à obscurcir, enfin à anéantir celui des gouverneurs des Provinces, des Commandants en chef et des Lieutenants généraux des Provinces .... Ils bridèrent celui des Evêques à l'égard du temporel de leurs diocèses .... L'autorité pécuniaire s'étend bien loin .... Ils attirèrent ainsi à eux une autorité sur toutes sortes de matières, qui n'en laissa plus aux Seigneurs .... '" (Saint-Simon, *Parallèle*, 285.)

access to the minor details of court life, also found opportunities to depict the cultural aspects of both French and foreign courts. If the world can be likened to a theatre where each person plays his role according to the times and circumstances, Limiers writes, the Court is the most dazzling play of all. One of the most curious spectacles at Court took place in 1715, according to Limiers, when the Persian ambassador arrived at the French Court. Before discussing his entrance into Paris, and the audience he received, Limiers writes, it is first necessary to report "... quelques particularitez remarquables touchant le genie et les manières des Ministres de ce Pays éloigné."

He continues:

Cet Ambassadeur se nommoit Mehemet Riza Beg: il changeoit cinq ou six fois d'habit par jour, tous d'étôfes à fond d'or et d'argent: ... . Quand il prioit quelques personnes à manger, il avoit une table longue à la Françoise, au bout de laquelle l'Ambassadeur étoit à terre, sur un tapis de Turquis, entouré de grans carreaux de Perse, aîant devant lui une pipe d'or à serpentaux qu'il avoit coutume de porter toutes les fois qu'il sortoit à cheval. /And, after a lengthy description of types of foods, tables, and manners/ ... Il se deshâbil-loît avant que de faire sa Prière: parce qu'il ne doit pas prier avec des habits où il y ait d'or. 56

Such a description, while admittedly limited to fairly surface characteristics, still begins to portray cultural

moeurs et les usages du dix-septième siècle, 135-38.

56 Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, X, 253-54. For other similar forés into cultural history, see Larrey, Histoire de France, VII, 157-58, 165-66; Brienne, Mémoires, II, 61-89.
diversities amongst men.

It was not only the Court which gave rise to this approach. Even the military history of the reign was subject to a cultural treatment. Daniel, for example, writes in the preface to his Histoire de la milice française, that he will trace the usages of the French nation and will compare them for different periods. And Limiers, writing about the French military successes, describes the situation whereby the King, as head of his army, receives the congratulations for the deeds of his generals. Such a custom, Limiers remarks, was observed constantly throughout the reign.

Of all the historians who attempted to write cultural history, perhaps the most successful was Paul Pellisson. His Histoire de Louis XIV was commissioned by the King himself during his first campaign in Franche-Comté. While the author's account is a laudatory one, Pellisson also explores in some depth the background and culture of specific villages. This, the author assumes, will increase the reader's understanding of history. Before describing the military aspects of the war, for example, Pellisson first discusses the country's fertility, wines, and horses, he shows the ties of their government to that of France, and he depicts the customs and character of the people thus:

57 Daniel, Histoire de la milice française, I, ii-iii.
Leur génie, de même que leur climat, tient beaucoup, et de la France, et de l'Allemagne, et partage presque en toutes choses les vertus et les vices des deux Nations, dont ils sont environnés. Ils sont rudes et grossiers en plusieurs endroits, plus polis en d'autres, brusques presque partout, portés à la médisance, à la raillerie et à la bonne chère, et si opiniâtres ... sincères, officieux, hardis, très-attachés à la Religion, dont les moindres traditions leur sont des loix inviolables ...  

Similar analyses are repeated for many other places and situations in this history. Pellisson's history was far more than an ordinary panegyric of the reign of Louis XIV. It was a venture into cultural, institutional, and political analysis which individually raised historiography to a new plane.

There were other historians as well who tried to incorporate cultural analyses into their works. La Fare, for example, in his Mémoires, compares the esprit of sixteenth and seventeenth century France. Both Lenglet Dufresnoy and Saint-Simon depict the moeurs of the French.

59Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV, II, 257-58; see also 254-61.

60See, for example, ibid., I, 72-89 [analysis of Lorraine], 283-96 [Holland], II, 109 ff. [Origins of War of Devolution], 326-27 [Besançon], 353-61 [Dole]. See Chapter VIII below. Another historian who tried to write in this analytical style was Cordemoy. His Histoire de France reveals a concern with people, customs, circumstances, and geography. However, he tended to get too entrapped by the details to portray cultural matters with the same ability as Pellisson.

61La Fare, Mémoires, 18-20.

62Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, II, 248-49; Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 276-80.
Saint-Rémy, author of Mémoires contenant ce qui s'est passé de plus memorable en France, credits the French character as the cause for this nation's artistic achievements. The manners of the French, Saint-Rémy writes, are easy, sweet, far from constraint and affectation. They are frank, sincere, enemies of artifice and injustice, and hospitable to strangers. Their greatest talent above all is for war. Although eulogistic and undoubtedly inaccurate, the significance of this work arises from the author's interest in relating French character to their customs.

Finally, we must mention one historian who tried to construct a work exclusively devoted to cultural matters. Louis Le Gendre wrote the work Moeurs et coutumes des français (1712) as an introduction to a multi-volume history of France. He analyzes the laws, religious ceremonies, feasts; and power structure of the early French nation. To help him in his effort to write cultural history, he uses philology as a means to clarify the customs of a given era. He argues, for example, that around the year 900, the word feuudem or fief replaced the term benefice. This change in terminology, the author argues, reveals the importance of a subject's faithfulness to his King. Le Gendre comments on the barbarity of specific customs and roundly condemns

63 Saint-Remy, Mémoires, 12.
irrational behavior. He discusses styles, moral attitudes, and governmental systems. While not directly focused on the reign of Louis XIV, such an impressive effort during this period should not go unnoticed. With the existence of this work, it can no longer be claimed that Voltaire was the first to construct a cultural history of France.

With the exception of Le Gendre and Boulainvilliers, most historians did not think in terms of constructing an entire institutional or cultural history. Yet, within the framework of political history, authors began to include to a still limited degree elements of a cultural or institutional analysis. They thereby expanded the scope of the histoire raisonnée. They also initiated what was to become a new form of historical writing.

64 See Le Gendre, Moeurs et coutumes, 16-44, 78. In a different genre was Montfaucon's Antiquité Expliquée, a five-volume encyclopedic work tracing the customs of the Greeks and Romans. The author is concerned with "tout ce qui regarde les usages de la vie." (Ibid., V, 3.) The work deals with all the artifacts of civilization, including monuments, measures, furniture, clothing, keys, cooking vessels, and vases. Montfaucon clearly expanded the scope of history to include cultural matters, and furthermore, used new types of sources to help him do so.

One way in which many authors attempted to deal with French institutions and culture was to trace the French kingdom from its origins. This method was essentially a throw-back to the arguments employed during the French Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century. Tradition became its own justification. Those institutions which had existed since the beginning of the monarchy were logically the rightful institutions of the kingdom. See Chapter VI, footnote 51.
Portraiture

The third way which historians found to expand the scope of a traditional political history was portraiture. Developed originally by the ancients, and resuscitated by Renaissance men of letters, the portrait was used widely in the seventeenth century by playwrights, novelists, and memorialists. Authors of the *histoire raisonnée* likewise painted portraits of both major and minor figures.

It was, for one, a means to get the reader to relate to the characters or individuals under study. If they could relate to the historical person, they would derive both greater amusement and better instruction from reading the history. Thereby, the twofold purpose of the author would be served. Through portraiture, the author could also begin to analyze the motivations of individuals. By depicting their character, their ambitions, and their inclinations, the historian could trace the causes which gave rise to their actions. In this way, the analysis of an individual through portraiture became a means to study the causation of events.

It was a generally accepted maxim that the study of man was a task worthy of the historian.65 Some disagreement

---

existed, to be sure, as to whether all men—common as well as noble—should be included in the study of history. But regardless of differences in their definition of art, all historians agreed that man was at the center of the drama of history. The portrait was the means to depict the protagonists of history.

The person illustrated with the greatest frequency as well as with the greatest variety was the King himself. Louis XIV was generally loved or hated, and the portraits of him which live on attest to the impassioned responses he elicited. The King was delineated by his physical appearance, his character, and his accomplishments.

Almost all historians, regardless of their view of the king's character or achievements, agreed that his appearance was both handsome and majestic. Detailed and well-proportioned features provided him with a beautifully harmonious visage befitting a classical hero. At the hands of his panegyrists, his physical appearance became an indication of his heroism and of his character. Even the more critical historians of the reign, like Larrey, Limiers, and Saint-Simon, agreed that the physical attributes of the King were indisputably pure. The King's features and

66 See, for example, Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 104-105. See also /La Serre/, Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième, 10, 17.

67 Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 5-6, 190; Limiers, Abrege chronologique, XII, 595; Saint-Simon, Memoires, XXVIII, 6, 143, 145.
noble stance gave him the external demeanor of majesty which was recognized by most of his contemporaries.

But portraiture went beyond the exterior physical description of a person. Committed to the historian's interest to portray the inner man and to discover his motives, some authors tried to depict and to analyze the character of the King. Many panegyrists merely credited Louis with the traditional attributes of the medieval king. He was concerned for his people, he was just and pious, he was fierce in battle. These characteristics, so traditional and so universally applicable in this general form, did not clearly distinguish Louis from other kings. How much more revealing and significant is this description by Pellisson, in which Louis emerges as an individual, rather than as a type:

... un Roi jeune et vigoureux, avec tout le bon sens d'un âge plus avancé ... d'un esprit au reste devant beaucoup plus à la nature qu'à l'éducation; droit, et éclairé par lui même, porté à l'équité et à la raison; très accessible pour le besoin; écoutant ou recevant avec patience et douceur les requêtes de tout le monde sans distinction; secret dans les desseins; ferme dans les résolutions; ... très-assidu à ses Conseils, mais se réservant le choix des opinions contraires, en quoi il excelloit ...

This portrait is clearly laudatory in tone, but nonetheless

68 See Chapter IX below.

69 Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV, I, 41-42. Pellisson also described the king in more contrived ways in his work. See, for example, ibid., II, 179, 246. See also Brienne, Mémoires, II, 305 ff.
the King appears as a distinct figure, with specific personality traits and interests. The portrait has clarity, and the subject comes alive as a unique individual.

Both Limiers and Larrey were more moderate in their evaluation of Louis XIV. Surprisingly, they can maintain an objective view of the King on almost all matters other than the Huguenot persecutions—a series of events in which both men had had a personal stake. Conscious of the negative effect of exaggeration, both men claim that they will neither hide the king's weaknesses nor glorify his virtues. By portraying him objectively, they will provide the greater service to the King, to their own readers, and to the discipline of history.  

According to Larrey, Louis XIV appeared every inch a king. His entire being was charming and august. "Tout annoçoit le Roi: une présence majesteuse, un port presque divin, un air, une taille, une bonne mine, qui attiroient les yeux et les respects de tout le monde."  

In addition to his stature, one should regard his beautifully-proportioned face, alive with vivacity and spirit. Both his friends and enemies agreed that he was born to rule. From the time he assumed the leadership of his country, he was assiduous, dedicated, and penetrating. With the aid of

---


71 Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 190.
Colbert and Le Tellier, he governed his kingdom with absolute power, and (as if to apologize for his absolutism) with the best order in the world. He was accessible and affable to everyone, especially to strangers, whom he charmed by his honesty and his majesty. He enjoyed a good joke which harmed no one, but objected to the more destructive nature of satire.

In his actions as king, Louis was indulgent over mistakes of ignorance, but severely punished pre-meditated destructive designs, Larrey claims. If the King economically burdened his people by heavy taxation, he enriched them by improving navigation and commerce. As father of his people, he attended to their economic and physical needs during times of hardship and famine. As a warrior, he can be compared to the greatest of military heroes like Alexander and Caesar.

Yet, Louis XIV had two serious failings: his passion for women and his immoderate quest for glory. For example, the excessive oppression which he visited both on French Huguenots and on any external threat was fatal to his own continued power. Misled by both his evil advisors and the power-hungry Madame de Maintenon, he viciously rid his country of a source of economic skill and raised the antagonism and fears of his neighbors. His oppression of the Pope and his continuing desire to create a French Empire finally pitted all of Europe against him and eventually
destroyed his good fortune. Except for these blots, Larrey concludes, the reign remains the longest, the most productive, and the most glorious in history. 72

Even Limiers, although much less encomiastic, agrees that Louis XIV exuded majesty to his dying breath. 73 Throughout his narrative, however, Limiers is more critically analytical than Larrey, although often he is less balanced in his judgments. His initial description of the King's character is particularly interesting because it reveals the author's ability to dissect the work of his contemporaries.

Using the portrait by Bussy-Rabutin as a base, Limiers criticizes the panegyrist's worship of Louis XIV. He agrees that the King was handsome, poised, and majestic, and continues to an evaluation of the King's "esprit." To Bussy-Rabutin, Louis was just, leisurely, and natural. With regard to the justice of his spoken word, Limiers states that it is easy to speak justly when one speaks as rarely as did Louis. He was naturally well-meaning, but this is not to say that all his actions were praiseworthy. His control of his passions, lauded by Bussy-Rabutin, is insignificant, claims Limiers, because this is a common attribute necessary for all kings. His magnificence must be

73 See, for example, Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, X, 300, 308-309.
measured against its effect on the weakening of his finances. And finally, Bussy-Rabutin's claim that Louis always kept his word is simply wrong. When it was a question of revealing his grace, it was clearly in his interest to keep his word. But, when it concerned the fidelity to treaties or promises, Louis was motivated solely by his own interest and his ambition. The King, then, must be portrayed as he really was for his physical bearing, his personality, his actions, and his motivations. Llimiers depicts all these, thereby clearly using portraiture as a constructive way to integrate a new breadth in the narrative of history.

Of all the portraits of the King in which Louis XIV was depicted both as a person and a ruler, those by Saint-Simon are the most colorful. As a member of the noblesse d'epée, Saint-Simon was convinced that the future of France could be preserved only by maintaining the power and purity of this class. But Louis XIV, rather than preserving the powers of the noblesse d'epée, allowed himself to be controlled by the "vile bourgeoisie." Almost everything that occurred could be explained, therefore, in terms of the petty motivations and manipulations of power-hungry men, amongst whom was the King. Saint-Simon's analyses and

74 Ibid., III, 5-11. See also ibid., II, part 1, 106-107; III, 3-4; Limiers, Abrege chronologique, XII, 595-96. See also Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 108, in which he praises the king as a legislator. Cf. Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire; 57, for the source for this passage by Limiers.
portraits are both highly subjective and very limited: the author fails to perceive the large causal factors of historical change. Yet in the process of focusing on the petty motives of men, Saint-Simon developed the psychological portrait, which in time was to introduce an entirely new approach to the study of the human actor in history.

Saint-Simon agreed with the majority of his contemporaries that Louis was naturally good, kind, patient, religious, moderate, and just. He was furthermore endowed with a natural grace, beauty, and majesty which added considerably to his image as King. There was never a man, Saint-Simon remarked, so naturally polished, measured, and distinguished. 75

Yet, Louis had an overriding psychological weakness which counteracted his natural abilities. This was his desire for power and his jealousy of other capable men. Notice how Saint-Simon portrayed the inner personality of the King in the following descriptions:

... une soif de grandeur, d'autorité, de gloire, jusqu'à ne vouloir de grand que luy; une crainte d'estre gouverné jusques à l'ostentation de ne l'estre pas: de la bonté et de l'équité naturelle; une jalousie de tout faire et de tout gouverner ... 76

Sa deffiance générale, son aversion du mérite, sa crainte de tous ceux à qui il croyoit de l'esprit,

75 Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 330; Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 6-7, 25, 143-51.
76 Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 216.
sa haine de tout nerf et de quiconque se sentoit, son penchant au contraire pour ceux dont il méprisait le sens et l'esprit ... De cette complication vinrent ses mauvais gousts en choses et en gens, ses mauvais choix ... d'où naquirent ses derniers malheurs qui furent si près de renverser la France.77

Notice also how Saint-Simon clearly shows the relationship between the king's psyche and its concrete manifestations in political acts of government. The king's fear of intelligent disagreement led him to make certain choices upon which followed the deterioration of the kingdom. At the time of Mazarin's death in 1661, for example, Louis decided to govern by himself. The king most prided himself on this decision, Saint-Simon comments, but never executed it.78 Instead, he thought to divide his ministers, but in fact he allowed himself to be governed by the most mediocre men in the kingdom, always believing that he was resisting intrigue and domination.79

A man like Louvois, for example, not only encouraged the king to pursue wars, but often provoked them to ensure his own continued power. The people suffered from the economic burdens, the king lost his allies, his reputation and his funds all because of one man of evil intent and another foolish enough to listen to him.

From a twentieth-century perspective, these analyses

77Ibid., 331-32.
78Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 3.
79Ibid., 106-107, 126, 264.
seem almost satirical for their simplicity. Yet, their significance for their own time should not be minimized. As early as the eighteenth century, Saint-Simon perceived the connection between a man's mental attitude and his actions. When this man was the king or an important adviser, these factors had a pronounced effect on the working of government. By probing below the surface characteristics of traditional portraiture, and by revealing the psychological features of these men of the past, Saint-Simon made his contribution to the writing of history.

Of course, Louis XIV was not the only figure subject to frequent character analysis and portraiture. As I have indicated, portraiture was a literary device of the seventeenth century, often used to create verisimilitude—thereby helping the reader relate to the story. Historians too, found portraiture a diversionary device, which enabled them to avoid the tedium of chronological history.

Both previous kings and present ministers were described by such authors as Le Gendre, Brienne, Limiers, Bussy-Rabutin, Choisy, Larrey, Riencourt and Sourches. Portraiture was especially popular at the hands of memorialists, who had observed the King and his ministers at close range and tried to construct personalized recollections of them.

Mazarin, a foreigner and a powerful ruler of the kingdom until his death in 1661, was as controversial a
figure as was Louis himself. He was frequently praised for his wisdom and his judiciousness, and just as frequently condemned for his avarice and his ambition. 80 Colbert, Le Tellier, Turenne, and Fouquet were often depicted summarily for their accomplishments and their character. 81 One memorialist, Abbé de Choisy, was particularly adroit at painting concrete and lively portraits of Louis' ministers. This analysis of Lionne exemplifies Choisy's insight into the subtleties of human response:

Hughes de Lionne ... avait un génie supérieur. Son esprit, naturellement vif et perçant, s'était encore aiguisé dans les affaires ... habile négociateur, que la réputation d'une trop grande finesse avait rendu presque inutile dans le commerce des Italiens, qui se défiaient d'eux-mêmes quand ils avaient à traiter avec lui .... Au reste, fort désintéressé, ne regardant les biens de la fortune que comme des moyens de se donner tous les plaisirs; grand joueur, grand dissipateur; sensible à tout, ne se refusant rien ... parasseux quand son plaisir ne le faisait pas agir; infatigable ... n'attendant aucun secours de ses commis, tirant tout de lui-même


81 See, for example, Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, III, 39; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 148; Sourches, Mémoires, I, 11-17.
écrivant de sa main ou dictant toutes les dépêches; donnant peu d'heures dans la journée aux affaires de l'État, et croyant regagner par la vivacité le temps que ses passions lui faisaient perdre.\textsuperscript{82}

How much more revealing than the contrived and formal portraits written by panegyrists, who depicted Louis and his ministers as types rather than as individuals!

The most valuable developments in portraiture came from the psychological penetration of character. Saint-Simon, I have shown, used this approach in his treatment of Louis XIV, and at times was able to apply his psychological awareness to a political analysis of the reign. Even prior to Saint-Simon, there were historians who dabbled in psychological analyses. Louvois, Louis XIV's minister of war, was particularly susceptible to this kind of treatment.

The great majority of historians of this epoch believed that Louvois consciously precipitated France into war for his own petty ends. La Fare, Larrey, and Limiers all take note of his pride, his tyrannical streak, and his jealousy of Colbert and of Seignelay. It was his jealousy of other ministers, they claim, that encouraged him to stimulate wars. As Limiers wrote:

\begin{quote}
La jalousie de Louvois contre Colbert fut la cause secrète de cette prise d'armes. Le premier se voyant inutile en temps de paix, inspira au Roi de faire la Guerre à l'Espagne, sous prétexte des Droits de la Reine ... \textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{82}Choisy, Mémoires, 67-68. For Choisy's view of other ministers, see \textit{ibid.}, 65, 66, 68.

\textsuperscript{83}Limiers, \textit{Abregé chronologique}, XIII, 9-10. See
But it was again Saint-Simon who was most capable of revealing the inner man through his depictions. Louvois was a capable, disciplined, and dedicated minister of war, who was tormented by peace, he writes. He sought every means to revive causes for war in order to feed his pride. All the French wars--the War of Devolution, the Dutch War, the War of the League of Augsburg--were nourished by Louvois. Saint-Simon continues:

C'était Louvois, l'auteur et l'âme de toutes ces guerres, parce qu'il en avait le département, et parce que, jaloux de Colbert, il le voulait perdre en épuisant les finances, et le mettant à bout ... Ce fut la même jalousie qui écrasa la marine dans un royaume flanqué des deux mers, parce qu'elle était florissante sous Colbert et son fils ... .

Thus we see how one man, motivated by his own quest for power and control, changed the course of history. Louvois' desires, according to Saint-Simon, acted on Louis XIV's psyche and together their interaction resulted in the provocation of wars. The psychological portrait could also be used to explain causation.85

At the hands of authors of the histoire raisonnée, portraiture was used widely. This was the author's means

also La Fare, Mémoires, 188-89, 206, 216; Larrey, Histoire de France, V, 20-21, 471.

84Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 54-55. See also ibid., 53-78; Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 219-20, 234 ff., 405.

85See Chapter VIII below. For other examples of psychological portraiture, see especially Boulainvilliers, Mémoires historiques, and Campion, Mémoires, 8-9, 11.
to expose vice and virtue, and to comment on the character of the historical person. Some authors even tried to reveal the psychological responses of men. By concentrating their attention on the human actors of history, these authors meaningfully expanded the scope of historical inquiry.

During the period ca. 1660-ca. 1720, the scope of historical writing was extended in at least three directions. First, while the framework of political-military history was largely maintained by authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, the very nature of Louis XIV's reign forced them to consider a broader range of topics. Specifically, the functions of the Court, the difficulties of the economy and the populace, and the development of the arts came under the aegis of the historian. Second, by the very nature of their analysis, description and digression, these authors laid the foundation for the cultural and institutional histories of the future. Again, the predominance of the Court, with its emphasis on the formal adherence to ritual and custom, seemed to stimulate the historian's awareness of cultural diversity. Third, the portrait was developed by these authors so as to expose the motivations, personalities and character of important figures.

During the period 1660-1720, the scope of history was broadened, albeit perhaps inconspicuously. The significant point is not whether the entire format of historical
writing had changed, but that authors had broken away from the approach of the chronologist in these small ways. They thereby set the spark for the fertile minds of the following century.
When an historian analyzes historical data or discusses the causes of events, he implicitly reveals his historical consciousness. An author's awareness of historical change and perspective, his breadth of vision, his adherence to an empirical methodology, and his commitment to secularism are disclosed through his analyses and organization of historical materials. To discuss the causes of events, the historian must have in mind certain ideas about historical development. All these elements comprise his philosophy of history, which is revealed either implicitly or explicitly in the course of his narrative. An author's theory of causation therefore affords the student of historiography an insight into the author's historical perceptions.

Authors of the histoire raisonnée had a relatively astute understanding of causation. Their analyses were essentially rational and secular. For the most part, the authors rejected providential theories of divine control over human affairs. Their appreciation of the multiple human motivations affecting action—including political, economic, psychological, and personal factors—was revealed through
their analyses of historical events. In the case of a few authors, their awareness of cultural relativity was made explicit in their treatment of historical data. The ways in which historians examined the causes of events and analyzed the data of history shall comprise the subject of this chapter.

Historians of the period ca. 1660 to ca. 1720 were certainly not the first to recognize the importance of studying cause. Polybius early argued its importance, stating that history could serve as a pedagogical tool only if the author could explain why one event led to another. But, despite Polybius' statement of the importance of causation, neither he nor ancient historians in general had much appreciation for historical perspective and circumstances, frequently arguing that the cyclical pattern of the past eventually would recur.¹

Seventeenth-century historians found more immediate value in the statements of sixteenth-century French historians about causation. Jean Bodin (ca. 1530-1596), for example, considered the effect of climate, geography, education, and government on human behavior. But in the final analysis, he too adhered to a cyclical theory of history, which represented the unfolding of Divine Will in the affairs

¹Bury, Ancient Greek Historians, 254-55; Lacroix, L'histoire dans l'antiquité, 237-38.
of this world.² Louis Le Roy (ca. 1500-1577), however, valued the theory of the relativity of cultures and argued that each culture had a unique character subject to continuous, biological change. His understanding, unfortunately, did not extend beyond this theoretical statement; his own historical works show him to be an "incompetent and uncritical compiler."³ A third sixteenth-century historian, Nicolas Vignier (1530-1596), found the cause for historical change in human behavior. His works, while not narrative history, exhibit an increasingly secular approach to the study of history.⁴

Seventeenth-century French historians learned the importance of studying cause from their predecessors. But the seventeenth-century intellectual climate had an even greater effect on the approach that the authors of the histoire raisonnée would follow. For one, the early seventeenth-century philosophy of raison d'état was used by many historians whose aim was to justify the actions of the French government. They argued that the government functioned as a result of necessity—a necessity which was defined in

²Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, 98-102; Church, Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France, 213-22.
³Huppert, Idea of Perfect History, 112; see also ibid., 106-115; Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship, 81-85.
terms of the general interest of the society. Through the use of this philosophy, historians wrote unrevealing but secular explanations of governmental decisions. As the seventeenth century progressed, this philosophy was replaced by one which took account of human response and passion. This change, also, was reflected in the works of historians.

Another important influence on the treatment of causation, although one which is difficult to trace, came from the teachings of scientists. Kepler, Galileo, and Newton all viewed the world mathematically, and showed that cause could be explained in quantifiable terms. To them, teleological schemes of final causation were no longer important. Rather, one had to observe the effect of one comprehensible element upon another, and derive laws from their continued observations. This empirical methodology, made more popular through derivative works, was incorporated by historians into their historical narratives. In so doing, they appreciably changed the approach to historical explanation. Now all could be understood in rational and secular terms, if the historian were an astute and patient observer. The teachings of the Scientific Revolution brought the

---

5Thau, Raison d'état, 396-401. See also Chapter I.
6Ibid., 36, 49-51, 401; Saint-Evremond, Observations sur Salluste et sur Tacite, Oeuvres, II, 431-33, 438; Fénélon, Lettre à l'Académie, 129.
study of causation to the forefront of the historian's attention.

In their theoretical statements, French historians of the period 1660 to 1720 assert time and again that the analysis of causation is central to the historian's task. Both Sorel and Saint-Simon, approximately 100 years apart in time, reject the work of chronologists for their failure to deal with causation. Saint-Simon refers to the work of Dangeau (which was an indispensable source for his own memoirs) as "si maigre, si sec, si contraint, si précautionné, si littéral à n'écrire que des écorces de la plus repoussante aridité." Similarly, Riencourt, Pellisson, and Daniel all assert the importance of tracing the causes of events discussed in their narratives.

Many of these commentators went further, and tried to determine the most likely causes of change. Here, theoreticians and narrative historians were in complete agreement. They both looked to the human actor as the single most important cause of historical change. This was not an insignificant determination, for one must remember

---

8 Sorel, La science de l'histoire, 6-7; Saint-Simon, Mémoires, I, 4.

9 Quoted in Cheruel, Saint-Simon considéré comme historien, 159.

10 Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française, I, 26 (Discours); Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV, III, 48; Daniel, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxv.
that as late as 1681, Bossuet was still trying to formulate a construct focusing on the ultimate control of the Divine Will. Alongside of Bossuet, however, stood the adherents of secular causal explanations. Saint-Evrémond, Saint-Réal, Lombard, and Lenglet Dufresnoy countered providential theories by arguing that the historian's task was to probe the human heart, and to reveal the motivations and inclinations of men. Men must be painted naturally, they must be revealed as individuals impelled by their own needs and personalities. Through long-term study, the historian perhaps could discover certain principles of human action, and like the scientist, discover laws of human behavior.

Yet, the historian's data was different from the scientist's. Some commentators recognized that man was the product of his unique environment, and that this environment was subject to constant change. Each age was marked by its own spirit, La Fare contended, and the esprit of each age affected the responses of human beings within that culture.

---

11 His Discours sur l'histoire universelle was written with this end.

12 Gillot, La querelle, 407-412; Saint-Evrémond, Discours, Œuvres, III, 231-32; Saint-Evrémond, Observations sur Salluste et sur Tacite, Œuvres, II, 434-37; Saint-Réal, De l'usage de l'histoire, 3-4; Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 5; Lenglet Dufresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, I, 2-3, 33, 35; II, 296-98. A similar statement can be found in Le Clerc, La vie du cardinal duc de Richelieu, I Advertissement, 3.

13 La Fare, Mémoires, 8-18. La Fare enters a lengthy discussion on the reasons for diversities amongst men. In
To describe a specific culture adequately, Lombard wrote, the historian needed to know the development of the customs and usages of the people, their form of government, the nature of the magistrature, police, militia, and religion, the geographical situation of the country, and the development of important families. From such perceptions as these were born the cultural histories of the Enlightenment.

In short, historians of this period clearly perceived the value of investigating causation, and further recognized that historical change was the product of the personalities of men and the circumstances of their culture. The analyses were primarily secular, and fairly complex for their time. This was a major contribution of authors of the *histoire raisonnée* to the growth of historical writing.

The Motives of Men: Cause and Effect

As historians probed beneath the chronology of events to determine why changes had occurred, they found that human interests often provided the impetus to historical variation. Whether the king, his ministers, wealthy private individuals, or the populace, all men were naturally inclined

---

this discussion, he reveals his awareness of the progress of civilizations, which, he claims, affects human responses. There can be no conformity amongst all men, because men are controlled by different cultural concerns at different periods of their development and the development of their society. He further believes that each man responds on the basis of his own fortune, and economic-social position.

---

to pursue their interests. This, in turn, caused alterations in the fabric of history.

Historians of this period focused largely on the men of power—that is, king and ministers. Coincident with the historian's love of portraiture was his curiosity toward human motivations. In this section I shall examine how historians related the motives of the king and of his ministers to historical causation.

The King.—Louis XIV, it was argued, was the center of power of the French monarchy. At his command, actions were undertaken, and changes ensued—sometimes to the advantage of the society and sometimes to its detriment. It was essential to establish the King's motives, so that the reader could determine why events had occurred, and thereby could increase his understanding of history.

Panegyrists, for the most part, disagreed. They assumed that they were justified in their unrestrained praise of the King. In their eyes, there was no need to uncover the concrete motivations for the King's actions. Rather, they attributed the cause of his success to his greatness, his vigilance, his intelligence, or his mere presence. 15

But there were historians during this same period

15 Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 167, 223-24; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 129, 145, 364-65. See also Chapter IX.
who tried to expose the King's motives in such a way as to explain both his personality and his political goals. It is revealing that most historians, whether the King's critics or his supporters, generally agreed on the motivations of his behavior. In discussing his foreign policy, for example, Courtilz de Sandras, Riencourt, and Bussy-Rabutin all contended that Louis XIV's policies were actuated by his jealousy, his self-interest and his spirit of aggrandizement.\(^\text{16}\) His supporters, like Riencourt, tempered the negative effect of this depiction by adding that Louis wished thereby to enrich his kingdom. But the personality of the King was well-known and did not remain hidden from the public.

Other historians of this period analyzed the motivations of the King with respect to his internal policies. Again, they largely agreed that Louis XIV was motivated by his desire for power, for glory, and for fame. Pellisson, while discussing the decision of the King to rule independently of a first minister, insisted that Louis' design was "... non-seulement de réunir toute l'autorité en sa personne, mais même d'ôter à ses Peuples tout moyen d'en douter ... ."\(^\text{17}\) La Fare agreed that Louis' vanity was


responsible for his failure to trust his ministers with adequate power. And Saint-Simon, the articulate critic of the reign, declared that Louis--driven by vanity and pride--had a natural weakness for flattery. He feared excellence in others and therefore consciously sought incompetency in his ministers, so as not to be threatened by them. As always, Saint-Simon showed himself to be a master of psychological portraiture. In his own words:

La vanité et l’orgueil, qui vont toujours croissant, qu’on nourrissoit et qu’on augmentoit en lui sans cesse, sans même qu’il s’en aperçût, ... devinrent la base de l’exaltation de ses ministres par dessus toute autre grandeur.

On a dit que le Roi craignoit l’esprit, les talents, l’élévation des sentiments, jusque dans ses génér- aux et dans ses ministres.  

Saint-Simon did not believe that these weaknesses were sufficient explanations in themselves. His Parallèle was written to trace the effect of education, environment, family and religion on the formation of character. Yet, in the end result, it was the personality of the individual which most easily explained his reactions.

To a lesser degree, some historians looked for the motivations of the King outside of his personality. Bussy-Rabutin attributed the creation of fourteen new dukes to the King's memories of the Fronde. In addition to his intention

18 La Fare, Mémoires, 259-60.
19 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 30-40, 88, respectively. See also ibid., 30-32.
of rewarding these men of quality, the author wrote, His Majesty remembered the period of his minority, when the Parlement of Paris wanted to govern the State. To prevent these and similar disorders, he expanded this body of men for the protection of the kingdom. Similarly, Isaac Larrey, Protestant author, found the motivation for Louis' oppression of the Huguenots in the evil designs of others and in the religious background of the King:

Prévenu par un implacable Clergé, et croiant faire un sacrifice agréable à Dieu de les exterminer, il donna autant d'Édicts qu'on lui en demanda pour un si cruel dessein ...

In short, authors of the histoire raisonnée wanted to discover and to reveal the motivations of historical figures. In the case of the King, most authors found the cause of his actions in his aggressive and determined personality. But, in addition, some historians tried to relate their analysis of the King to the events and circumstances of his reign.

The Ministers.--The most obvious source of influence on the King stemmed from his ministers. These were the men closest to him, whose function was to offer advice. To determine why events occurred, the historians had to know not only what these ministers advised, but what motivated them to do so. Again, we find that most historians looked

20 Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 142-43.
to the personality of the ministers involved. They argued implicitly that the self-interest of the minister determined the nature of his recommendations to the King.

Henri-Philippe de Limiers, an ardent critic of absolutism, claimed that the ministers of the King were largely motivated by their own petty ambitions. Mazarin, Limiers claimed, influenced Louis' belief that he could rule independently because he wanted no competition even in death. 22 Anne of Austria, mother of the King, purposely neglected his training and his education in order to keep him dependent on her for a longer period of time. 23 Madame de Maintenon, the King's second wife and counsellor, exercised a strong influence over Louis, which she guarded jealously and sought to protect at every possible occasion. Notice how Limiers described the effect of her personal influence on the affairs of State:

... elle devint maîtresse absolue à la Cour ... .

La dévotion dont elle se piquoit étoit un beau voile dont elle couvroit son ambition. Elle commençâ à régenter dans le Cabinet, puis étendant ses influences jusques sur le Conseil, rien ne s'y décidait plus que conformément à ses suggestions ... . 24

In other words, the personal ambitions and motivations of those people close to the King had a significant effect on

---

22Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, II, part 2, 351; see also Brienne, Mémoires, II, 131.


24Limiers, Abrege chronologique, XIII, 243-44; see also Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, VIII, 262-63.
the history of the period. Their motives caused historical changes to occur.

The master analyst of personal motivation was Saint-Simon. His depiction of the personality and motivation of Madame de Maintenon and Louvois, for example, while lacking impartiality and breadth, nonetheless reveals his intense interest in discovering the cause of events. Saint-Simon was not able to see beyond the petty, and often inconsequential causes of historical change. He did not devise general principles of causation, but rather looked to the reality of the human passions for his explanation of cause.25 Yet the value of his work lies precisely in the psychological analyses which followed.

His analysis of Madame de Maintenon, for example, is a case in point. By nature she was a flatterer—"insinuante, complaisante, cherchant toujours à plaire."26 Her grace, her ease, and her self-respect helped facilitate her ambitions. Her sweet, refined and eloquent language earned her a hearing at court. Through these abilities, she was able to dupe the King continually. Never seeming to have a particular interest, she was able to direct the King to institute her will. Without the King's knowledge, Madame de Maintenon exercised a strong control over decision-making.

25 Cheruel, Saint-Simon considéré comme historien, 70-72, 639-42.
26 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 215.
in the kingdom. She even stimulated the eventual fall from favor of Louvois, but only after his damage had already been accomplished. 27

Many analysts of the reign attributed the decline of France to her power-hungry ministers. Louvois, for one, was frequently cast in this role. Saint-Simon viewed him as a scheming, self-interested, power-hungry minister who manipulated Louis into one war after another. Peace tormented Louvois, we are told, and he therefore promptly seduced a young King desirous of glory. 28 It was Louvois' jealous nature which motivated his intrigues. 29 The King, blinded by his passion for power, allowed such petty motives to dominate and to ruin him. 30 In this instance, we can see how both the motives of the King and those of a minister stimulated the development of a particular historical situation. Cause and effect arose from the personalities and ambitions of the individuals.

Saint-Simon's analysis was not different in kind from that of his predecessors, Larrey and La Fare. While they may not have developed their analysis to the same extent, they did argue that Louis was corrupted by his

27 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 204-220, 243-60, 280-82, 67-68.
28 Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 219-20, 405.
29 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 54-55; see Chapter VII, pp. 322-23.
30 Ibid., 62.
flatterers who inebriated him with schemes of grandeur and power. Louvois was only the most pernicious of these ministers. 31

Authors of the histoire raisonnée were not particularly astute in their analysis of the motivations of men. What is nevertheless significant is that they wanted to determine the motivations of human behavior. They sought to do more than describe what had occurred; they wanted to explain why events had occurred— they wanted to attribute causes to history. One source was found in the personalities and ambitions of the human being. In this way, historians both advanced a secular analysis of history and fostered an interest in causation.

The Causes of Specific Events

It was not always feasible to find the causes of historical events in individual rivalries and ambitions. How, for example, could the sincere historian dismiss such events as the Dutch War, the Fronde, the War of the Spanish Succession, or the revocation of the Edict of Nantes as the result of individual quests for power? Of course, many authors of this period recognized only the petty motives and immediate causes of these complicated situations. Some

31 Larrey, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxvi; V, 20-21, 471; La Fare, Mémoires, 206-207. See also Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, II, part 2, 54-55; V, 34-35; Histoire de la décadence de la France. The effect of evil ministers who stimulated Louis' desire for glory is the theme of this latter anonymous work.
authors, however, began to see the more substantial, long-term causes and tried to analyze the development of a given historical situation in these terms. There existed, then, a wide variance of sophistication on the subject of causation. To exemplify this diversity, I shall describe in this section the causal treatment of French wars, the Fronde, and the suppression of the Huguenots.

External Wars.--Most historians of the period 1660-1720 did not have access to the information which would reveal the causes of the wars fought between France and other European countries. Their sources of information largely were controlled by the government. It is therefore not surprising that their causal analyses of these events were relatively shallow. Moreover, traditional French historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries focused on the details of battles, but neglected to consider the causes of these wars. It is logical that historians would be influenced (even if inadvertently) by these past models of historical writing. In analyzing the causes of French external wars, historians of this period were not particularly incisive.

Their treatment of the Dutch War is a case in point. Admirers of the King, such as Daniel, Quincy, the authors of the Mercure galant, and the King's panegyrists, Racine and Boileau, could find at best three motives for the stimulation of the King's ambition. For one, the Dutch
formed the Triple Alliance. Then, the Dutch ambassador to France, Van Beuningen, was responsible for the production of a medal injurious to French glory. Finally, after all that Louis had done for the Dutch, they showed such ingratitude that Louis felt compelled to humble them.  

No explanation was offered for the formation of the Triple Alliance. No attention was given to the build-up of hostilities, or to the inevitability of war in situations where cultures, religions, economies, and political ends were in obvious conflict.

Other equally limited explanations were proposed. Both La Fare and Saint-Simon attributed the war to the power rivalry between the Le Telliers and Colberths. The kingdom, Saint-Simon maintained, was flourishing and rich. Colbert had created a situation in France similar to that of Rome under Augustus. Both Le Tellier and Louvois trembled at the success of Colbert, and sought to provoke a situation from which France would have difficulty recovering. They decided to poison the King's mind with thoughts of war.

---


33 Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 10-11; La Fare, Mémoires, 67-68.
author goes further. How, for example, did they convince the King of the necessity of war? How was the intrigue carried forward? What events did they seek to exploit? In short, such explanations as those advanced did little to explain the reasons for the Dutch War.

Even in the case of this war, however, there were some historians who recognized that the situation contained its own complexities. Pellisson, as we shall see, traced the development of Holland over a 100-year period in order to reveal its unique culture, economy, etc.34 One of the most perceptive statements on the difficulty of ascertaining the causes of this war came from Larrey, in his preface to the Histoire de France:

Quelles furent précisement les causes de cette fameuse Guerre, il seroit peut-être difficile de le dire, et je les ai moins trouvées dans les Mani- festes des deux Rois, qui la déclarèrent à la République, que des prétextes pour en cacher le véritable sujet ... 35

Although Larrey could not himself determine the subtle causes of this war, he at least perceived the difficulties facing the historian.

In certain cases concerning French foreign policy, historians provided their readers with some appreciation of the complexity of causal analysis. Sourches, for one, recognized the multiple factors involved in forming

34See below, pp. 354-360.
35Larrey, Histoire de France, I, Preface, xxiii.
alliances. The French "reunion" policy in Strasbourg, he wrote, stimulated a great movement amongst the princes of Europe, and especially amongst those who were jealous of the grandeur of France. The Prince of Orange tried to gain the support of such powerful enemies of France as Germany. The Dutch leader argued that Germany's self-interest lay in opposing the enterprises of the French conqueror. But, Sourches continues, the German nation was disunited, and the Emperor, who had undertaken to reunite Germany's forces, was too occupied with this to think of French aggression. He also had to contend with Hungarian rebels, who were then assisted by both the Prince of Transylvania and the Turks. The circumstances were not ripe for the formation of an alliance against the French, who continued to enjoy prestige and power in Europe. Sourches explains the complexity of this situation without reference to political intrigue or to petty jealousies. His appraisal is balanced, and reveals his astute understanding of historical causation.

Authors of the histoire raisonnée could, if they so desired, combine an analysis of cause with a moral argument. Henri-Philippe de Limiers was one author who often tried to integrate the two. In his analysis of French external policy, he reveals how French excess led to this nation's decline. His analysis of French policy in 1696 is representative of the author's style, in which he combines causal

36 Sourches, Mémoires, I, 47.
explanations with moral dictates, historical example, and analogy. It is worthy of quotation in full:

L'Adresse de la Cour de France, à desunir ses Ennemis par artifice, quand ses forces ne peuvent les surmonter, a paru en plusieurs occasions différentes, mais surtout au sujet de cette Guerre. Tous les Membres de l'Empire n'avoient pas balancé à se réunir dans une même Cause, pour la défense commune, dès qu'ils avoient vu que la nécessité les y contraignoit. Tel fut l'effet des procédés violens de cette Couronne, qui ne servirent qu'à rendre la force de l'intérêt commun supérieur à toutes ses oppositions. On peut dire que ces dispositions générales, qui, comme un torrent, entraînent tous les esprits, ont toujours été regardées comme des présages ou plutôt comme des causes prochaines de quelque grande Révolution. On en venoit de voir un exemple fameux dans celle d'Angleterre, où tout le pouvoir d'un Roi s'étoit éclipsé en un moment, par l'aliénation des esprits.37

French policy, Limiers contends, was to divide and conquer. By her aggressive policy, France eventually ruined herself, because she made the enemy aware of the need for united strength. Once sentiment was disposed against the French nation, it was like a raging torrent, which could not be easily stopped. In this case, the feelings of the people were essential, as they were in England during the Civil War of 1642. Limiers recognizes that the two situations were not exactly similar, but the English experience should nonetheless stand as a warning to the French King.

What I have shown is that a wide diversity existed amongst authors of the histoire raisonnée in their treatment of causation. For the most part, specific wars were not

37Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, VI, 184-85; se also VIII, 3-7.
analyzed for long-term causes, but were described as the result of petty jealousies and power ambitions. However, the political situations or external policies which gave rise to French wars were treated with somewhat more complexity. It must be stressed again that all authors, even if unsophisticated, attempted to ascribe causes to historical events.

The Fronde.—The French Civil Wars were analyzed in greater depth, by and large, than the external wars of aggression. To be sure, there were (and always will be) many historians who offered relatively meaningless explanations of the causes of these internal wars. But there were also other historians, notable Quincy, Larrey, and Limiers, whose causal treatment of the Fronde revealed their serious concern with historical analysis.

Quincy viewed the Fronde as an internal struggle which passed through various stages of development. He explains: Several edicts designed to support the costs of external warfare were not verified by the Parlement of Paris. This refusal was supported by the people, who expressed

---

38 See, for example, Marolles, Histoire des roys de France, 415-16; Courtiz de Sandras, Mémoires contenant divers événemens remarquables, arrivés sous le regne de Louis le Grand (Cologne, 1684), 66-67; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie françoise, I, 159-66; Riencourt, Abregé chronologique, II, 836-37; Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 35-45, 63.
their discontent with the edicts, and their alienation from the government. In time, pushed by the people who presented demand after demand, the Parlement became a mediator between the sovereign and the subjects. The Parlement itself was split into factions, represented by the Frondeurs, Mazarins, and Mitigés. Finally, during the third stage of the struggle, the various executive councils, such as the Chambre des Comptes, the Cour des Aides, and the Grand Conseil, discontent at the cessation of their salaries, resolved to unite to demand the reformation of the State. Quincy's argument is that one stage of the dispute precipitated the next. The causes of this event were multiple and subtle.39

Larrey sees the primary cause of the Fronde in the bad administration by the financiers. This, he claims, led to heavier taxation and the formulation of new edicts by the Surintendant and the Cardinal. On them fell the hatred of the people. As a result of this, in the middle of seeming felicity, the kingdom languished in a state of poverty and misery. All of Paris turned against the Cardinal, and regarded him as the cause of all these ills. The necessity for money led to excessive taxes. The people suffered, and had recourse to Parlement as the avenger of their oppressed liberty. The Parlement attacked the government, and the kingdom found its nobility divided into two factions. Thus

developed the Fronde. In the discussion of these internal wars, Larrey takes into consideration the economic state of affairs, the responses of the populace, and the general loss of respect for authority. His analysis of cause is remarkable for its clarity, detail, and objectivity.

The most detailed and astute analysis of the Fronde, comprising over a volume of text, is that by Limiers. In tracing the origins of the Civil War, Limiers begins with a consideration of French history. It is true, he contends, that France has been ruled by kings for over 1200 years, but they have never had absolute authority. While more powerful than their English counterparts, the French rulers were controlled first by the Estates-General and then by the Parlement. The right to register treaties and the right to verify monetary edicts were traditional rights of these legislative bodies. During the rule of Richelieu, these traditions were disregarded, and the Cardinal effectively began to establish a tyranny. Never failing to moralize, Limiers argues that wise kings, who understand their true interests, will never disregard Parlement, because they will recognize that the sustenance of their power comes from both their arms and their laws. "Les loix desarmées tombent dans le mépris: Les armes qui ne sont point moderées par

---

40 Larrey, Histoire de France, I, 43-46, 384-85. See also below, p. 361.
les Loix tombent bientôt dans l'anarchie." Unfortunately, however, Mazarin followed in the footsteps of Richelieu, reversing the ancient laws, and establishing despotic authority. These actions precipitated the convulsions which led to civil war. The body of the kingdom continued to bleed, and fell into a state of lethargy. Failing to recognize the disease, the doctors (or political leaders in this case) took no measures to heal France's wounds, and the illness therefore continued to grow. Such were the long-term causes of the Fronde.

The immediate causes were quite distinct. The fault clearly lay with the administration. The treasury remained bankrupt. Since 1643, Anne had found the coffers empty. As a result, extraordinary taxation was levied on the Parisians. Finally, the Parlement refused to verify the Queen's edicts. Adding to the misery of the people occasioned by the financial situation was their inability to trust Mazarin. A stranger subject to Spain, a man impelled by his own ambitions, a person interested in favoritism rather than justice—these were the characteristics of the First Minister. The cause of the Fronde, then, was to be found "... dans le dérangement des Loix, qui causa

---

41Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, I, part 1, 293-94.
42Ibid., 290-96.
43Ibid., 296-99, 303-304, 358.
In his analysis of the Fronde, Limiers applied all of his historical techniques. The use of sources, the narrative style, the analysis of both long and short-term causes, the explicit moralizing, and the broad scope (including a consideration of popular will, economic matters and legal factors) are reflective of his historical consciousness. Particularly in his complex causal analysis of the Fronde does Limiers show us the capabilities of the *histoire raisonnée*. 

The Huguenots.—The French Protestants, I have shown, were either cast in the role of devils or of angels, depending upon the sympathies of the historian. Quite obviously, the historian's analysis of the reasons for the revocation was consistent with his religious and political proclivities. Those who supported the revocation argued that Louis acted to preserve his kingdom. The Huguenots, these historians argued, factionalized France both politically and religiously, and would have destroyed Louis' efforts to unify the kingdom had they the chance. Louis was compelled to revoke their privileges both to dissipate their pernicious influence and to preserve the well-being of the state. In the works of panegyrists, it was claimed that Louis acted in the name of justice and

---


45 See Chapter VI, pp. 270-273.
Christianity to return his flock to the fold. 46

A totally different explanation of the cause of the revocation was proffered by Huguenot sympathizers. Even more fascinating is the fact that these apologists were anxious not only to reveal the flimsy reasons for the King's act but to discredit him further by discussing its catastrophic effect. The analysis of cause and effect was the author's subtle means of judging the event. The causal explanation of the author, containing an implicit moral judgment, underscored the major purpose of the histoire raisonnée. Through these analyses, the author could better instruct his readers of the nature of man.

Choisy, Saint-Simon, and Larrey all ascribe Louis' policy to his evil advisers. Madame de Maintenon inspired the King's somewhat hysterical religious devotion. Louvois pushed him further, in order to stimulate foreign hatreds. La Chaise felt compelled to support that which was justified as an act of religious piety. In short, the King was misled by audacious and ambitious men, whose only aim was to increase their own power. 47 The motivations and rationales for the revocation are described in colorful language by Saint-Simon:

46See Chapter VI, footnote 67.
47See Choisy, Mémoires, 117-18; Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 222-23, 312; Larrey, Histoire de France, V, 184-89.
Le Roi étoit devenu dévot, et dévot dans la dernière ignorance. À la dévotion se joignit la politique. On voulut lui plaire par les endroits qui le touchoient le plus sensiblement, la dévotion et l'autorité. On lui peignit les huguenots avec les plus noires couleurs: un État dans un État, parvenu à ce point de licence à force de désordres, de révoltes, de guerres civiles, d'alliances étrangères, ... . On saisit l'orgueil d'un roi en lui montrant une action qui passoit le pouvoir de tous ses prédécesseurs ... . On le détermina, lui qui se piquoit si principalement de gouverner par lui-même, d'un chef-d'œuvre tout à la fois de religion et de politique, qui faisoit triompher la véritable par la ruine de toute autre, et qui rendoit le roi absolu en brisant toutes ses chaînes avec les huguenots.\textsuperscript{48}

Such analyses, it must be admitted, are not terribly astute. Saint-Simon failed to consider the economic inequalities which resulted from granting Huguenots incentives for conversion. This was one reason why Louis decided to revoke their privileges. Saint-Simon likewise did not perceive Louis' interest in regaining the good will of Innocent XI. All Saint-Simon saw was that Louis' pride could be triggered in destructive ways. Nonetheless, the mere fact that authors felt the need to assign any cause was in itself an innovation.

To solidify the moral import of their analyses, Protestant sympathizers also discussed the effect of the revocation. Foreign allies became enemies, the French kingdom was depopulated, commerce was ruined, skills were

\textsuperscript{48}Saint-Simon, \textit{Mémoires}, XXVIII, 224-25.
lost, public hatreds were elicited.\textsuperscript{49} Such was the general abomination fathered by flattery and cruelty, comments Saint-Simon.\textsuperscript{50}

We have seen that the analysis of cause amongst authors of the \textit{histoire raisonnée} varied from simplistic accusations to multi-causal explanations. As in other aspects of their philosophy of history, there were wide divergences of ability and discernment. But, except for the authors of the \textit{histoire abrégé} and for some panegyrists, all historians of the reign seemed to agree that the treatment of causation was central to their task. By designating causal analysis a cardinal position in their narrative, these historians significantly contributed to seventeenth-century historiography.

Analysis of Historical Data

The most advanced representatives of the \textit{histoire raisonnée} did not isolate the study of cause from the analysis of the political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances of a particular country. These historians recognized that change was the result of a myriad number of long and short-term factors, and that no one cause would ever explain the complexities of the historical situation. Implicitly, they perceived the relative and developmental

\textsuperscript{49}La Fare, \textit{Mémoires}, 189 ff.; Saint-Simon, \textit{Parallèle}, 312; Saint-Simon, \textit{Mémoires}, XXVIII, 227-29.

\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Mémoires}, XXVIII, 229.
nature of the continual march of history. In this section, I will review the type of analysis pursued by two authors whose works number amongst the best of this genre. I have purposely chosen two authors of different political backgrounds, with decidedly different aims. It will emerge, nonetheless, that their techniques of analysis have certain traits in common.

Pellisson.—More than any other historian of this sixty-year period, Pellisson comprehended the complexities of historical explanation. One of the most significant aspects of his *Histoire du Louis XIV* is its structure. The author does not get enmeshed in petty details, as do so many of his contemporaries writing panegyrics, but tries to give the reader an overview of the historical materials. His approach is analytical: Pellisson focuses on the important events of the reign, and ties them together by revealing the web of diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural factors that affect historical change.

At the very outset of his history, Pellisson attempts to give some structure to Louis' reign. He divides the reign, beginning in 1661, into three periods of six years, each which, he claims, were marked by two significant changes. Through this structure, the author tries to create some meaning out of the morass of historical detail. He writes:
... je trouve dans mon propre sujet en trois intervalles presque égaux, trois révolutions différentes ... On y verra six années de paix, où le dedans de l'État prend une face toute nouvelle, avec un éclat et une réputation au dehors, qui excite premièrement l'attention, puis la jalousie de toutes les Nations voisines; six années ensuite, où la guerre soudainement allumée entre la France et l'Espagne, ... six dernières années enfin, où toute l'Europe est en armes, mais avec un succès qu'elle eût eu peine à attendre ... Et ce qui semble encore plus important, c'est que ... on pourra observer deux changements généraux, l'âme de tout le reste, et dont les suites en apparence doivent être longues à l'avenir, l'un ... en la manière de gouverner, l'autre, en celle de faire la guerre. 51

To Pellisson, history has a distinct meaning. There is pattern in history—a pattern which reveals the progress or decay of culture. Over an eighteen-year period, according to Pellisson, the people of France witnessed changes in the manner of governing and of conducting warfare. These transformations in the historical fabric—not petty intrigues and gossip—are what creates meaning out of history.

Having introduced the reign, Pellisson continues with an explanation of the substantive changes created by Louis XIV after the death of Mazarin. He presents details of the new councils established, taking care to explain their functions, their contacts with the King, and their powers. 52 How unique to find this kind of analytical detail in a work of history commissioned by the King himself to stand as his eulogy!

52 Ibid., 14-15.
But the most impressive part of Pellisson's work is yet to be described. It is with his analysis of the Dutch War, and the events preceding it that Pellisson reveals his real abilities. Those who only look to immediate causes and motives, like the writers of gazettes, attribute the French-Dutch differences to the period of the Triple Alliance and the conquest of Flanders in 1667. But, the author writes, the historian should go back to the sources as much as possible, for only by showing the beginnings and the consequences of the eternal scheme will human vanity and custom become apparent. It is therefore not possible to explain the state of Europe, Pellisson contends, "... sans toucher même sommairement toute l'Histoire de cette République [Holland], son origine, ses progrès, sa constitution, et l'état où elle se trouvait alors." 53

Tracing the history of the Dutch Republic over a 100-year period, Pellisson treats such diverse matters as the Dutch revolt from Spain for religious reasons, the structure of provincial power, the functions of the Estates-General, the government of the villages, the spirit of liberty and equality which prevailed, the system of pensionaries and the formidable degree of power which they could wield, the origins of the houses of Nassau and of Orange, the character of William II and of De Witt, and their roles.

53Ibid., 281-82.
in government. With such obvious differences between Holland and France, how would they ever be able to establish diplomatic relations?

There was even more to consider, in addition to the differences in the backgrounds of the two nations. The Dutch could only survive through commerce. Originally, their principal occupation was fishing. After their revolt from Spain, they began to manufacture goods. The necessity of defending themselves accustomed them little by little to short shipping expeditions, to transporting armaments, and later to shipping large amounts of merchandise.

The essential causes of the Dutch War were economic, Pellisson argues. From 1670 ensued a tariff war--first the Dutch and then the French raising impositions on the other's produce. All negotiations after this point were futile. Both the Pensionary of Holland and King of France seemingly entered into negotiations, but, the author wisely perceives, they were only ready to give up externally significant matters while they remained adamant on the essentials. They therefore slipped into war unavoidably as the result of the natural differences between the two nations. While Pellisson did not consider all the possible causes of this war, his appreciation of cultural differentiation and

54 Ibid., 283-96.
55 Ibid., 300-301.
56 Ibid., III, 203-204.
long-term causation reveal an exceptional historical consciousness for this period.

Likewise, in his treatment of the War of Devolution, Pellisson shows his concern with the long-term cultural origins of the dispute. The war between France and Spain was precipitated by the conflict over the right of devolution, the author claims. In order to evaluate and to understand the dispute, Pellisson argues, it is necessary to consider the origin and nature of this right. If the historian traces the question back to Christian and Roman times, Pellisson continues, he will find that second marriages were not universally sanctioned. Rather, there existed an infinity of particular rights, which varied from nation to nation. For this reason, the author concludes, it is particularly difficult to determine which party held the just position.

Pellisson's argument is legalistic. He recognizes that laws and customs change imperceptibly from era to era and from country to country, thereby complicating the clarification of the dispute. Both Spain and France accused each other of bad faith. The author explains the arguments presented by each. Essentially, Pellisson supports the French position, but not without first explaining the complexities of the argument, the cultural complications and the nature of monarchical rights. 57

57 Ibid., II, 109-142.
Wars arise, according to this author, not necessarily as a result of a particular insult or a concrete act of aggression, but from the unavoidable continuous rearrangement of interests and needs. To exemplify this position, Pellisson reviews the state of Europe after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. With this peace in 1668, hostilities ended. This did not result, however, in the cessation of suspicions and jealousies amongst nations. Both those who desired war and those who detested war perceived that it would break out once again in a short while. The reasons lay in the almost imperceptible differences amongst men:

... les changemens si ordinaires aux choses humaines, soit dans les affaires, soit dans les esprits; les differens assez considerables encore a regler sur les limites; l'alternative choisie par les Espagnols, qui laissoit leurs principales Villes de Flandres au milieu des nôtres; la discorde qui se glisse avec tant de facilite, non-seulement entre des Peuples aigris et envieux de tout tems l'un de l'autre, mais entre les meilleurs freres du monde ... l'imprudence même où la passion des inferieurs, capable de forcer la sagesse et les inclinations des Maîtres, ne laissoient presque pas esperer au monde Chrétien, ... une longue et durable tranquillité.\(^{58}\)

There were, of course, specific differences which the author could spell out. For one, the Spanish were angry at the losses suffered in Holland, and sought to foster suspicion against the French in all foreign courts, especially those of Holland. The Dutch—a people characterized by pride—were particularly capable of spreading these suspicions.

The pride of the Dutch, Pellisson contends, arose from their

\(^{58}\) Ibid., III, 48-50.
association with republican government; since each man felt some control over the affairs of state, he had a sense of self-righteousness. These different characteristics of men arise from their culture. Thus, despite the seeming peace in Europe, the natural state of affairs and the ever-changing perceptions of men would precipitate future hostilities.  

Pellisson's historical analyses conclusively reveal his outstanding merit as a historian. Not only does he understand the intricacies of history, but he shows that the causes of events are natural concomitants of these entangled skeins. To depict the causes of events, then, one has to consider economic, cultural, social, political, and personal factors. Events are caused by the continual readjustments among these factors. The broader the scope of the historian, the better his appreciation of cause. Thus, Pellisson foreshadows a new era of historical awareness.

Larrey.—This author, like Pellisson, was committed to finding rational and concrete causes for the events of history. In his nine-volume Histoire de France, he shows over and over again that the motivations of men of affairs are related to coherent political, economic, and military

---

59 Ibid., 48-74. See also his discussion of Franche-Comté, II, 254-61, and that of Besançon, II, 326 ff. Pellisson contends that republican government quickly degenerates into tyranny, because powerful men can take advantage of the trust placed in them. See ibid., I, 286.
priorities. The purpose of the historian was to expose, as clearly as possible, how events occurred, for this was the best way for the student of political life to come to understand the contingencies likely to arise. Larrey discusses a myriad of factors in his history, including local problems, financial difficulties, popular opinion, and foreign influences. He is able to differentiate between the underlying and immediate causes of events. The Fronde, for example, resulted from a long build-up of frustration occasioned by popular poverty and financial strain. But civil war would not have occurred, if not for the principal causes: the evasion of Beaufort, the disgrace of various nobles, and the imprisonment of parlementaires.60

Larrey writes his history with remarkable objectivity for his era. His narrative is controlled, and he seems to have no interest in lauding or condemning any specific historical figure. He does, however, clearly subscribe to the position that popular support is essential for the maintenance of political power. To the extent that Louis alienated his people by means of his military and financial policies, Larrey condemns him and shows that this was a powerful factor in his loss of authority. In Louis' early reign, Larrey contends, the King tried to reform the finances of his State. This was a wise measure because the

60 Larrey, Histoire de France, I, 474 ff. See also above, p. 348.
financial prosperity of the populace created good will toward their ruler. With time, Louis' war policies necessitated greater and greater taxation. In addition the wars caused famine, resulting in general misery. Notice, for example, Larrey's analysis of the connection between war and popular suffering:

La disette, qui venoit de la rareté et de la cherté des grains, avoit diverses causes. Il est certain que les Magasins, qu'il falloit faire pour la subsistance des Armées et des Garnisons, enlevoient un grand nombre de grains que les Pourvoeurs venoient chercher dans les maisons des Laboureurs. Tel est le fleau de la Guerre, que l'ambition des Princes entretient au lieu de la réprimer.61

Notice, also, his implicit condemnation of Louis, and the way in which he works moral commentary into the narrative.

Also remarkable about Larrey's analysis is his perception of the difficulty of determining the cause of events. Often he asserts this problem in the discussion of a particular event, contending that the real cause is something different from that which is stated by the parties involved. The following analysis of the negotiations between France, Holland, and England in 1665 is typical of his approach. In this analysis, Larrey also reveals his essential agreement with Pelisson that it is often the subtle interrelationships amongst men—not the formal signing of treaties--which account for the development of particular situations. Larrey writes:

61Ibid., VI, 84.
Les Ambassadeurs entamèrent leur Négociation à Londres dès le mois d'Avril, et revinrent sans avoir rien fait sur la fin de Décembre. Il serait difficile de dire la véritable cause qui empêcha le succès de leur Médiation: le Roi D'Angleterre l'avait acceptée: ils ne firent que des propositions raisonnables .... Plusieurs causes y concoururent: la véritable est difficile à définir: les méfiances et les mesintelligences qui regnoient par tout et jusque dans le même Parti, en Angleterre entre le Roi et le Parlement: en Hollande entre la Cabale du Pensionnaire et celle du jeune Prince d'Orange: en France entre cette Couronne et la République des Provinces Unies, la France craignant que la République ne fît son accomodement sans elle, et la République craignant à son tour la même chose de la France ....

It was the mutual distrust and fear, rather than any concrete decision, which resulted in the failure of these negotiations. Once again, Larrey returns to the essential proposition that the human character accounts for alteration in the fabric of history. This time, however, Larrey argues that the responses of men must be perceived in their unique historical context in order to make any sense at all.63

Two historians—one an apologist commissioned by Louis XIV to write an account of the Dutch War, the other a Huguenot refugee in the Netherlands—determined to condemn absolutism. Yet, remarkably, both take into consideration many of the same factors in their historical analyses. Economic criteria, culture, laws, political and military needs, and long-term origins all have their place in the

62Ibid., III, 399.

63For other examples of his treatment of cause, see Ibid., III, 107-108; V, 46 ff.; VII, 277-78.
determination of cause. Add to this the effect of human psychology and ambition, and one can appreciate the historian's difficulties in analyzing his data.

To be sure, an historian's approach to his material is relative to his age and background. Pellisson and Larrey, while both French, represent different cultures. Yet, these two historians agree on how to approach their materials. Thus it can truly be maintained that a new consciousness was born. It was a consciousness which recognized that the analysis of cause was central to the historian's task. Even more important, causal analysis was perceived as a complicated web of subtle interrelationships between men and their cultures.

The analysis of historical material and the explanation of cause was, I have shown, a major concern of historians of this period. For the authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, causal analyses were welded to moral digressions and rational dictates. Cause was integrated as part of the "raisonnée" element of these histories.

The causal explanations reveal specific characteristics of their own. For one, these analyses are decidedly

---

secular in nature. Not only is there a noticeable absence of reference to Divine Providence, but some authors actually attack providential and miraculous beliefs in their narratives. The analyses of historical change by authors of the *histoire raisonnée* center largely on discernible worldly occurrences.

For the most part, these authors looked to men as the motivating force behind historical change. Men acted on the basis of their self-interest and passions. At times, this coincided with the good of the kingdom, and at other times, their interests worked to the detriment of national goals. In the eyes of these writers, men had few long-term goals. They were impelled by political, psychological, and personal needs—by jealousies, suspicions, ambitions, and intrigues. Through such depictions, authors of the *histoire raisonnée* helped to further the development of the psychological portrait.

For analyses of long-term causation, historians looked to the circumstances of history. The broader their scope, the more likely they were to understand the complexities of historical development. They found multicausal factors in cultural differences, economic needs,

popular demands, geographical considerations, and political dissimilarities. Implicitly and explicitly, historians like Pellisson, Daniel, Limiers, and Larrey revealed the relativity of civilizations. Laws, customs, and governments had to be understood from their own origins. Not only were they unique to their own civilization, but they changed imperceptibly throughout time. This belief was to be made even more explicit at the hands of eighteenth-century historians. Saint-Simon clearly revealed the continual change of culture in his Parallèle, and Boulainvilliers, in his État de la France, applied this recognition to provincial differences. In short, the historical consciousness of this group of authors is clearly revealed through their causal analysis. In this area, their contribution to the development of historical thinking must not be minimized.

66 See, for example, Saint-Simon, Parallèle, 25, 104-105, 214-15, 305-307, 309. Saint-Simon writes: "Les circonstances des temps et la position de famille ont esté si différentes entre ces trois monarques que bien des choses touchant leurs mœurs ne se peuvent comparer." (Ibid., 104.) Boulainvilliers, in État de la France, I, 64, compares the French intendant system with that of Rome, and tries to show how they arose differently as a result of their dissimilar civilizations. See also Saint-Simon, Mémoires, XXVIII, 17, 24; Daniel, Histoire de la milice française, I, iii, xi, xiv, xv; II, 594-95, 603-609; Lombard, Comparaison des deux histoires, 84-87.
CHAPTER IX

THE KING'S APOLOGISTS

Nous vivons sous un prince ennemi de la fraude,
Un prince dont les yeux se font jour dans les coeurs,
Et, que ne peut tromper tout l'art des imposteurs.
D'un fin discernement sa grande âme pourvue
Sur les choses toujours jette une droite vue;
Chez elle jamais rien ne surprend trop d'accès,
Et sa ferme raison ne tombe en nul excès.

(Tartuffe: Act v, Sc. 7)

So wrote Moliere, in his finest poetic style, in an obvious effort to glorify his King. His concern lay neither with factual accuracy nor historical detail, but with literary excellence, personal eulogy, and moral truth. Such were the goals of a French classical dramatist in the seventeenth century.

Moliere was not, of course, a historian. But his description of the King was not unlike that written by many of the panegyric historians of the reign of Louis XIV. Their purpose similarly was to glorify the deeds of their leader. The art of eulogy was, however, a literary art; panegyrists patterned their works in accordance with the stylistic regulations inherited from the Greeks and classicists.
The panegyrists were not, for the most part, historically oriented. The scope of their narratives was narrowly curtailed by the dictates of classicism and by their own political philosophy. The accuracy of their accounts necessarily was distorted by the very nature of their purpose, which was to glorify and to commemorate. They were disinterested in multi-causal explanations, for this would detract from the omnipotence of their subject—the King. Finally, their political perspective, focused on the unchanging attributes of kingship, contained within it an essentially stationary view of history. In all the ways that authors of the histoire raisonnée contributed to the development of historiography, panegyrists deterred the growth of historical consciousness. In most cases, their works were subjective, narrowly focused and uncritical literary exercises in eulogy.

As I have indicated previously, panegyrists and narrative historians both used the form of the histoire raisonnée. The two groups therefore cannot be clearly distinguished. A panegyrist like Pellisson, for example, did reveal an advanced historical consciousness in his work, and must be considered as a serious historian. Amongst panegyrists, however, he was the exception rather than the rule. His colleagues, the historiographes of Louis XIV, largely
adhered to a contrived model of historical writing which had little merit. From their work arises the condemnation of seventeenth-century French historiography.

Keeping in mind that the division between serious historians and panegyrist is at times fairly arbitrary, I have nonetheless tried to divorce the two in order to distinguish between the good and poor histoire raisonnée. In this way, it can be shown that there was merit in this form of historical writing so long as the author did not blindly follow formal patterns of literary taste. Most panegyrist, however, generally structured their works in the accustomed formal style so as to satisfy the demands of their patrons, thereby sacrificing an historical form for a literary one.

In this chapter, I will explain the limitations of the majority of panegyric accounts. There will be an attempt to compare these on the same criteria that have been applied to other historical accounts discussed in previous chapters. In order to fully understand the approach of these panegyrist, it will be necessary to review their treatment of the King. Therefore, after an historiographical analysis, I will trace the description and attributes of the King which emerged from panegyric works.

Panegyrics as History

The Purpose.—The purpose of the panegyric was never in question. The author's intent was to heap praises on his protagonist, in most cases the King. Panegyrist
were in general agreement that the elevation of their subject required a comparably elevated language. A good king could not be discussed in common terminology. His nobility necessitated linguistic eloquence and grace. And Louis XIV, especially, the very embodiment of classical grace, was worthy of this exalted treatment.

These views, I have shown before, were consistent with the dictates of classicism. In discussion of the heroic, or the tragic, all trivialities should be avoided, wrote Boileau.¹ The eulogy, according to Menestrier, combines "les beaux de l'Eloquence avec les graces de l'Histoire".² The element of le merveilleux—one of the rules of classical composition—was reserved particularly for epics, grand genres, and tragedy,³ and was employed often in the panegyric accounts of Louis XIV.

The classical credo was, in part, an inheritance from the ancient Greek writers. In the Greek work of literature, all particular, circumstantial or contingent elements were eliminated. Each individual was seen as a character type, marked by specific human traits.⁴ In

¹Wiley, The Formal French, 238.
²Menestrier, Les divers caractères, 107.
³Bray, "L'esthétique classique," Revue des Cours et Conférences, 443.
⁴Wright, French Classicism, 9-12.
Greek narratives, this portraiture by types was intended to reveal the heroic, the virtuous, the evil, or the tragic to be found in the world. Their effort was to portray a type—an athlete, a warrior, a legislator. This was also the way panegyrist treated the king. He was seen as a hero, and was compared with other heroes throughout time. The circumstances of his reign were insignificant, as were the peculiarities of his personality.

In the effort to praise, panegyrist neglected the historical. This neglect stemmed from their attachment to literary forms. But as long as the writer believed that it was impossible to commemorate the deeds of his subject without formal adherence to these rules of style, there was no way to integrate historicism with the panegyric.

The Scope.—The stylistic limitations set by classicism necessarily limited the scope of the panegyric historians. Their grand purpose, we have shown required a grand style. They viewed Louis XIV as a type—a hero—the very embodiment of monarchical grandeur. Their portraits of the King revealed Louis' justice, equity, moderation, grace, and ability. Focusing almost entirely on the


6See Callières, Panégyrique historique, 4; Godard de Bérgny, Abregé de l'histoire de France, en vers (Paris, 1679), Preface.
King, and consciously rejecting the circumstantial aspects of his reign, these writers ignored the unique, the specific, or the distinctly individualistic traits of Louis XIV.

Louis XIV was lauded primarily as a warrior. Most panegyrists, then, concentrate on the military and strategic accomplishments of the King. Unlike other authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, they were not interested in the popular demands, the economic problems, or the cultural life of France. Racine, in his *Relation de ce qui s'est passé au siège de Namur*, clearly had no other focus than a military-political one. With great detail, he reviewed the strategic position of Namur, he described the King's review of his troops, and he depicted the organization of squadrons and batallions. After an almost day-by-day account of the military operations, Racine attributed the total success of the operation to Louis XIV:

> Enfin, tous ses ordres étant donnés, il partit de son camp ... d'autant plus satisfait de sa conquête que cette grande expédition étoit uniquement son ouvrage; qu'il l'avoit entreprise sur ses seules lumières, et exécutée, pour ainsi dire, par ses propres mains ....

---

7Racine, "Relation de ce qui s'est passé au siège de Namur," in *Oeuvres*, V, 347. For other examples of his military-strategic treatment, see *ibid.*, 314-15, 318-19, 324, 326, 329-30. See also La Bizardière, *Histoire de Louis le Grand*. This work, while a panegyric of the complete reign, concentrates primarily on the military accomplishments of the King.
In this work, as in the Précis historique, the King is described as the heroic conqueror and warrier. His powers, alone, stimulated the victories of the French nation.

The panegyrists of the reign rarely dealt with the popular responses to the King's policy. When they did, their intent was to further glorify the King. The data was either distorted to fit the theme of the author, or was consciously ignored. Notice, for example, Racine's description of the general well-being of the kingdom at the time of the Dutch War:

Jamais elle ne fut si florissante, jamais la justice ne fut exercée avec tant d'exactitude, jamais les sciences, jamais les beaux-arts n'y ont été cultivés avec tant de soin. Il a lui seul plus fait bâtir de somptueux édifices, que tous les rois qui l'ont précédé.  

Here the author had the perfect opportunity to discuss the popular feeling about the war. Unlike authors like Larrey, Limiers, Le Gendre, and Saint-Simon, who considered the unhappiness of the people a major indication of monarchical weakness, Racine, like the majority of the panegyrists, had no interest in the individual subject.  

Whatever

---

9 See Chapter VII, 297-299.
the "people" suffered was irrelevant, so long as the king fulfilled his duty as a legislator, a patron, and a warrior. His physical bearing, his attention to majesty and to magnificence were the ways in which he revealed his grandeur. These were noted with far greater frequency than was the state of health of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{10}

In a few cases, panegyrist\s discuss\ed the effect on the populace of frequent warfare. But the data was always distorted to fit the general apology of the reign. François Faure, for example, in his \textit{Louis le Grand}, claims that he will not disguise the hardships that the people of the kingdom suffered during the multiple wars Louis fought. But this suffering, he adds, was generally salutary to the state, because the taxes enabled the King to expand his kingdom, to propagate his reputation, to affirm his authority, and thereby to assure continued French fortunes.\textsuperscript{11} In this way, the scope of panegyric accounts remained limited to the accomplishments of the King.

Panegyrist\s also tended to follow a chronological format, recounting the military and political accomplishments of the kings from year to year. While they did

\textsuperscript{10}See, for example, Médaill\es du règne de Louis le Grand, 32; Hencourt, \textit{Histoire de la monarchie française}, I; 286, II, 4-8, 101 ff.

\textsuperscript{11}Faure, \textit{Louis le Grand}, 52-57.
engage in eulogistic digressions periodically, their chronological approach limited their opportunities to comment on the material. And, as I have indicated previously, the "raisonnée" element of the histoire raisonné was a factor which helped to broaden the scope of the historical narrative. Since most panegyrics did not adhere to a topical format, there were fewer opportunities to show the connections between events, and therefore, fewer opportunities to diverge from a narrow military-political scope. For all these reasons, then, the panegyrist failed to broaden the scope of historical inquiry.

The Accuracy.—Despite frequent statements by authors of panegyrics which assure us of their concern with the truth and their interest in historical sources, there is much historical material which is either explicitly ignored, distorted, or clearly false. It was practically a rule—or at the very least, a convention—that works of history (and some works of literature) would begin with the author's statement of the absolute verity of the account. This was one means to create the vraisemblance so important to the classical writer. It was also a means to create a feeling of importance about the work.

12 See Chapter VII, 280, 320 and Chapter VIII, 351 above.
Therefore, panegyrists, memorialists, and antiquarians alike insisted upon the complete objectivity and accuracy of their works. Some panegyrists, like Donneau de Vize and Rene Richard, even tried to convince their readers of their use of authentic source materials. These materials, they argued, made their accounts valid beyond doubt. In the words of Donneau de Vizé:

Mon histoire n'est point un panegyrique, quoique donnée du vivant de ce Monarque; c'est un tissu de fait justifiés par des pièces dont plusieurs sortent du cabinet de differens Souverains; ainsi ce n'est pas moi qui parle, ce sont ces monumens de sa gloire, si l'on peut donner ce nom à ces pieces historiques.

Yet, despite these fervent words, their texts belie their statements. Since their purpose was to glorify the King, any material which did not support this aim, was ruthlessly suppressed or distorted. Truth was an ethical norm. The King represented virtue, justice, and love. He was depicted as an ideal to be emulated. Whatever faults he had—his penchant for mistresses, his immoderate ambition—were overlooked or excused, so that the characterization of the

---

13 For panegyrists, see Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 13-14; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française, I, 34-35; Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, 9-10.

14 Donneau de Vizé, Mémoires, X, Notice after Epistre, n.p. See also ibid., IX, Epitre; X, Epitre; Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, 13-14.
ideal would survive. 15

A historian who was masterful at historical description and eulogy, and who ignored or distorted embarrassing historical details was Jean Racine. His Précis historique was intended as a panegyric account of the Dutch War. 16 It is a good example of the methods used by panegyrists, and the consequent distortion of accuracy which marked their texts:

Racine's obvious intent was to eulogize Louis XIV. In the first two paragraphs of the Précis, he asserts that the power of the French kingdom in 1672 resulted from the wisdom and excellence of her King. From here on,

15 See, for example, Bussy-Rabutin's decision to discuss Louis' frequent love affairs, in Histoire abrégée de Louis le Grand, 149-50. These must be discussed, the author contends, because the facts are too well-known to be suppressed. Does this suggest then that less known facts could be ignored if they did not serve the author's purposes? Nonetheless, Bussy-Rabutin claims that these affairs in no way affected the well-being of the kingdom or the glory of the King. Another indication that truth was conceived as a moral norm can be found in Marolles, Histoire des roys de France, Epistre, a iii. In this passage, Marolles states his hope that the King will find only the truth—but a truth which is pleasant, and has as its end the glorification of the monarchy.

16 There has been some disagreement as to the authorship of this work. However, it is now generally accepted that the Précis historique was the work of Racine and Boileau in their capacity as historiographes du Roi, a position held from 1677. This Précis was intended as an introduction to a larger work memorializing the accomplishments of the King during the Dutch War. The King intended to give this work as gifts to those he judged worthy of his favor. The history was never finished,
France is identified with Louis. Every sentence reveals Racine's pride as a Frenchman and his adulation for French gloire. There is no analysis of the specific circumstances which caused the Dutch War; the cause was simply the pride of the Dutch. The account contains no dates or figures, and the chronology of events is, at times, confused. In addition, certain details appear to be fabricated, in order to better praise the King. The victories of the war are accentuated, while the defeats are skipped over, and sometimes ignored. The successes are described in very colorful language: What emerges are classical pictures of the God-fearing avenger of criminal activity. These descriptions clearly reveal Racine's literary ability.

We can detect the author's application of classical literary techniques within the narrative. This example of Racine's manipulation of le merveilleux and vraisemblance is indicative of his style:

... on peut voir qu'il y a quelquefois des choses vraies qui ne sont pas vraisemblables aux yeux des hommes, et que nous traitons souvent de fabuleux, dans l'histoire, des événements qui, tout due to the rekindling of the war. The project terminated in another way, in 1702, with the Médailles du règne de Louis le Grand--a work of inscriptions to which both Racine and Boileau contributed. Racine is also responsible for the authorship of a complete history, Histoire du royaume sous le règne de Louis XIV, which was completely destroyed in a fire at the home of Valincour in 1726. The only historical works of Racine which remain are those which were in other hands at the time of the fire. The Précis had been sent by Valincour to Abbe Vatry, and fortunately survives. (Jean Racine, Œuvres de J. Racine, ed. M. Paul Mesnard 15 vols.; Paris, 18657, V, 233-39.)
incroyables qu'ils sont, né laissent pas d'être véritables. En effet, comment la postérité pourra-t-elle croire qu'un prince, en moins de deux mois, ait pris quarante villes fortifiées régulièrement; qu'il ait conquis une si grande étendue de pays en aussi peu de temps qu'il en faut pour faire le voyage, et que la destruction d'une des plus redoutables puissances de l'Europe n'ait été que l'ouvrage de sept semaines?17

By such descriptions, the author presents the King as a person endowed with super-human qualities and capabilities, all the time assuring his reader that his account is faithful and impartial. He recognizes the improbability of his own words, but tries to convince the reader that his account is an accurate assessment of the talents of his hero.

For the reader unfamiliar with the Dutch War, Racine's description is plausible. But when one begins to examine Racine's account closely, the inaccuracies become clear. His treatment of the crossing of the Rhine, one of the key events of the war, is a case in point. According to Racine, the King recognized the invincible barrier posed by the Rhine. Nevertheless, intrepid in the face of danger, and with a promptness which astounded those present, he determined to cross the river. No

mention is made of the discussions over the place of crossing, or of Conde's assistance, which Louis himself indicates in his Mémoires. The troops, Racine continued, kept to their ranks, and when necessary, they made their horses swim to the other side. Again, Racine ignores the impetuosity of a group of French volunteers, led by the Duke of Longueville, who broke away from their ranks, joined by Conde and his son. He ignores as well the casualties of the operation. The crossing of the Rhine revealed, in Racine's version, the heroism of Louis XIV, the exact discipline of his troops, and the unmarred success of the French in their moral crusade. The departure from historical truth is obvious.

Panegyrists of the reign of Louis XIV did not, for the most part, define truth in the same terms as did other historians. The basic truth was that Louis XIV was worthy of glorification and perhaps even deification. Any slight distortion of detail was justified if the end result was achieved. They did not, therefore, value factual

18 Racine, "Précis historique," Oeuvres, V, 246-47. For a comparison with a contemporary account, see Wolf, Louis XIV, 221. There are other examples of Racine's distortion. In his account of the flooding of Amsterdam, Racine claims that the Dutch were confused and leaderless. Part of this confusion stemmed from the death of Jean De Witt. In order to save their country from French invasion, William opened up the dykes in complete desperation. Racine's chronology is confused in
accuracy. This limited the historical merit of their narratives.

The Causes.—Panegyrist took little interest in the causes for Louis' success or the causes for French victory. For them, the cause of French achievements was taken for granted: it was a function of the King's general superiority. These commemorators, with the exception of Pellisson, had no awareness of the long-term factors affecting decision-making. They felt no inclination to offer multi-causal explanations of historical events. One need only compare Racine with Larrey or Pellisson to recognize the obvious differences in causal analyses between traditional panegyrist and authors of narrative histories. The King was the root of all success. Having stated this, panegyrists saw no need to pursue the issue further.

Unlike authors of the histoire raisonnée discussed in previous chapters, the King's apologists made no effort to keep their accounts secular. In fact, one of the ways to glorify the King was to endow him with divine attributes. 

this account. The dykes were opened on June 20, 1672. Jean De Witt was not assassinated until August 20 of that year. Compare Racine, ibid., 248-49, with Ernest Lavisse, Histoire de France illustrée depuis les origines jusqu'à la révolution (18 vols.; Paris, 1913), VII, part 2, 311-14. Compare also the varying accounts of the siege of Besançon in Racine, ibid., 257-58, and Wolf, ibid., 238.
Louis XIV, le roi dieudonné, was depicted as a king half human and half divine. His birth was a gift from the heavens. As a king divinely inspired, Louis was more powerful than most mortals. Not only was his creation the work of God, but God dispensed his usual rules of nature to create a superior human being. Both Louis' character and his abilities were reflections of the divine.¹⁹

Whenever these authors wished to attribute a cause to Louis' success, they tended toward providential explanations. Some of them argued that God acted through secondary causes. They took their clues from Louis himself, who in his Mémoires, had asserted that God fortified kings, clarified matters for them, and guided them, but did not conduct their affairs for them.²⁰ Many authors simply attributed Louis' success to divine protection. This statement by Mirat de la Tour is typical:

Mais sans parler de sa justice inébranlable de sa grandeur, et de sa modestie dans ses sentiments, l'hérésie éteinte, les Rois protégés contre la violence de leurs Ennemis, la suite continue de ses prosperitez, son règne long, et toujours glorieux, marquant visiblement la protection divine.²¹

¹⁹For examples of this argument, see La Serre, Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième, 3, 12; Bé guiding, Histoire de France, en vers, 339-40; Richard, Discours sur l'Histoire des fondations royales, 15-16, 23, 48-49; Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 17-18.

²⁰Mémoires, 118-19; see also La Motte le Noble, Histoire panégyrique de Louis XIV, 3; Boyer des Roches, Panégyrique de Louis XIV, 2-3.

²¹Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 179.
Other panegyrists explained his military exploits, his attack on heretics within the kingdom, his response to the Frondeurs as divinely-inspired and divinely-protected actions.22

There were other more secular explanations given of the King's accomplishments, but these too lacked perspicacity. Some authors, like Racine and Bussy-Rabutin, contended that Louis' success resulted from his genius or his greatness.23 This was really no explanation at all, but merely a means to reiterate their praises of their subject. Other authors did come up with more concrete motives for his actions, which coincided with the attributes of Louis' personality. His achievements, for example, were seen as the result of his courage and his wisdom.24 The King, himself, was often more perceptive than his apologists. He at least recognized the beneficial effect of establishing a reputation as a powerful and courageous king, "... rien ne faisant de si grands effets en si peu

22See, for example, Boyer des Roches, Panegyrique de Louis XIV, 39; La Bizardière, Histoire de Louis le Grand, 4, 22, 58, 61; Béagny, Histoire de France, en vers, 383; Callières, Panégyrique historique, 7; Mercure Galant, 1672, Vol. II, 208.


24Boyer des Roches, Panégyrique de Louis XIV, 41.
de temps que la réputation du prince". His reputation with regard to his devotion to work, his interest in his subjects, his careful choice and supervision of his ministers, and his distribution of rewards would perpetuate his kingdom along the paths which he had forged.25

When it came to determining the motivations for the King's actions, panegyrists again looked to Louis' personality traits. The construction of hospitals for the poor, erected during Louis' reign, was motivated by the King's piety and zeal.26 So also were his attacks on heretics.27 The Dutch War was fought on a principle of honor. The Dutch were ungrateful for all of Louis' aid, and sought to ignore the French King, who was responsible for their survival. Louis could not let such disrespect pass. He resolved to punish their ingratitude. Other princes were jealous of Louis' reputation; as a consequence of their fear, their jealousy, and monetary bribes, they formed an alliance with the Dutch. With the odds

25. Mémoires, 31. The King was also perceptive with regard to the needs of the kingdom. Finances, religion, and justice all required a king's attention, he claimed. Likewise, the control over the nobility and care for the people were essential to maintain order and stability. See ibid., 16-18, 36-37, 67.


27. Ibid., 52-54; Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 131-32; La Bizardière, Histoire de Louis le Grand, 36-37.
against the French King, his chances for success seemed poor. Yet, God rewards the just and so the sweets of victory obviously fell to Louis.\(^{28}\)

With most panegyrists offering explanations such as those indicated above, how surprising it is to find Pellisson's account of the Dutch War. Not only does this author explore long-term causation, but he undertakes historical analyses which probe into the customs, law, culture, economies, and governments of the contending parties. His analysis is superior to that of most authors of the seventeenth century, and to many of the authors of the eighteenth century. His work stands as a vivid reminder that while most panegyrics add little to the historiography of the seventeenth century, they must never be ignored completely. While Pellisson was indeed unique for his century, his work is nonetheless a panegyric history of Louis' reign. And the historical analysis contained within is, without question, an astute and perspicacious examination of historical cause.

The Unchanging Perspective.—Most important of all for the growth of historical consciousness was a con-

\(^{28}\) For such descriptions, see Faure, Louis le Grand, 177-78; Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 74-75; Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 178-79; Donneau de Vizé, Mémoires, I, 87-91; Racine, "Précis historique," Oeuvres, V, 243-45, 254-56.
cept of development. Without this concept, the historian lacked a raison d'être. No age need be distinguished from any other; no distinction need be drawn between the specific and the universal; no differentiation need be made between history and literature.

While many of the authors of the histoire raisonnée perceived the ever-changing, fluid nature of civilizations, most panegyrists maintained a static world-view. This arose in part, as I shall show below, from their political philosophy. They judged a king in terms of his attributes: these traits were the unchanging characteristics of every king since the beginning of monarchy. The unique characteristics of kingship were therefore insignificant. That which was distinctly historical was unimportant.

This attitude can be illustrated by the many comparisons which panegyrists drew between Louis XIV and other heroic figures. He was compared not only with earlier French kings from Clovis to Charlemagne, but with major ancient leaders as well. Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, and Alexander all shared the same attributes as Louis—as warrior, legislator, jurist, and father—but the Sun King possessed these qualities to a superior degree. Louis even could be compared favorably to Solomon, David, and the gods. Unlike Saint-Simon, who pointed out the differences in historical circumstances amongst the three
Bourbon kings, panegyrists believed they readily could compare one ruler with another.\textsuperscript{29} The net effect was that their works were unhistorical. These comparisons served only to emphasize the non-developmental perspectives of the authors.

Thus, we can see that the panegyrists of the reign of Louis XIV did not, for the most part, think in historical terms. The scope of their works was confined to the person of the King. It was limited even further by the linguistic prerequisites of classicism. The accuracy of their accounts was distorted to fit the eulogistic interests of both author and patron. There was little or no causal analysis within the narrative. And finally, these authors operated under a static perception of history, without any grasp of historical development.

Yet, the form of their works often followed that which we have described as the *histoire raisonnée*. The authors clearly did impose their own judgments on their narrative, and often ornamented the text with literary and moral disgressions. Historiographically, however, there is little of value in their works. While the narrative historians discussed in previous chapters were able to combine the form of the *histoire raisonnée* with the content of history, most panegyrists utilized the form, but ignored the content of historians. It is this lack of content which has led to the contention that all seventeenth-century historiography was sterile. As I have shown in previous chapters, this view is without substance.

**Political Philosophy of Panegyrists**

Louis XIV's panegyrists wrote their accounts of his reign with the sole aim of pleasing their King. To do so, they rigidly adhered to monarchical doctrines and they eagerly described Louis as an unchanging archetype. Their conception of the attributes of monarchy was based on medieval and sixteenth-century theories of kingship. They viewed the king as the embodiment of unchanging principles. Therefore, their political philosophy itself restrained them from viewing history in developmental terms.
In medieval theory, the world was a harmonic unity, created and sustained by God, in which every part had its place and its function. The role of the king was dominant, and the attributes of kingship—which marked every ruler to some degree—sustained the monarchy. The king was not perceived as an ordinary human being, but was considered a type of priest. His divinity was transferred to him through religious ceremony. In his capacity as king, he was viewed either as a delegate of Christ or of God. The monarch, then, combined both secular and spiritual powers. In addition, medieval theorists maintained that the king, as pater subjectorum, had a responsibility to administer justice. To care for the needs of his people, the king had both the right and the obligation to decide marriages of his subjects, to hear their grievances, and to punish their wrongdoings. The king was the law itself, and he alone controlled privilege. If liberty were to exist, it had to be based on order; order, in turn, required absolute authority. Finally, medieval writers perceived the king as the chief warrior of the realm. The king protected his subjects from

30 Kantorowicz, King’s Two Bodies, 43-49; Frantz Funck-Brentano, L’ancienne France: Le Roi (Paris, 1912), 165 ff.

attack; they, in turn, owed obedience and the performance of specific duties. The phrases pleine puissance, seul justicier, loi vivante, Empereur en son royaume, used often by seventeenth-century writers, were based on the medieval theory of kingship.

During the Middle Ages, theorists had referred to the king as a semi-divine person, but they perceived the State in familial, contractual terms. Not until the sixteenth century was it argued that the king, instituted by God, was responsible only to Him. The king was to be revered as the lieutenant of God. No disobedience by subjects could be tolerated, either politically or religiously. Since no contract existed between ruler and subject, the king alone was responsible for political order and for the moral well-being of his kingdom. As Louis XIV himself wrote: "'La volonté de Dieu est que, quiconque est né sujet obéisse sans discernement'; "'... quelque mauvais que puisse être un prince, la révolte de ses sujets

32 Kantorowicz, King's Two Bodies, 259.


This was the political theory of the "divine right" of kings.

Panegyrists writing between 1660 and 1720 were loyal to monarchical theories. As classicists, they believed that if harmony reigned within, the felicity of the kingdom would necessarily be expanded. Louis was viewed as the head of a large family, unifying the diverse interests of the whole. Uninterested in tracing the origins of the French kingdom, they justified monarchy and royal authority on the basis of tradition and time. The monarch was established by God for the good of the subjects. While the king was to be sovereign in his land, it was also held that reciprocal rights and duties existed between the king and his subjects. The king was the sole legislator, administrator, and judge. His obligation was to insure the protection of his subjects,

35 Cited in Pagès, Les institutions monarchiques, 13.
36 Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique, 36-37.
37 Gallières, Panégyrique historique, 5-6.
and to grant them general prosperity. The people, in return, owed absolute obedience, honor, and respect to their rulers. A good king, it was argued, needed no restraints, for he was like a father to his subjects, and would always keep their well-being in mind.  

Monarchy, sustained by piety and justice, required neither the backing of the people nor propitious historical circumstances, but was its own support.  

Not only did panegyrist contend that monarchy was essential to the sustenance of the kingdom, but they looked to Louis XIV as the ideal monarch of all times. All historians, whether panegyrist or not, agreed that Louis XIV's grace, august exterior, rich physical stature, and handsome visage provided him with the trappings of kingship. The panegyrist associated these physical traits with the King's heroism. What is remarkable is that the King was described as physically magnificent,
but in such general terms that no portrait emerged. This
description by Vertron is indicative of the panegyrist's
technique:

Louis LE GRAND a toutes les qualitez qui font
un Heros. charmant; il a la taille noble,
grande et belle, son air est meslé de majesté
et de douceur; ses yeux sont vifs, et ses regars
fiers, main de cette fierté raisonnable, qui con-
vient aux ames Royales. En un mot, tout est
grand, tout est parfait dans sa personne.41

The king was depicted as a classical hero—as a type—but
in the process he lost his individuality. Unlike the
portraiture of memorialists like Abbé de Choisy or Saint-
Simon in which the individual comes alive on the paper
before our eyes, the panegyrist preferred to create an
ideal image of perfect proportions.42

When panegyrists described the characteristics
and accomplishments of Louis XIV, they tended to comply
closely with the attributes which applied to all monarchs
throughout time. No clear distinction was drawn between
personal character traits and political acts. Rather,

41 Vertron, Parallèle de Louis le Grand, 47-48.
See also Faure, Louis le Grand, 40; La Motte le Noble,
Histoire panégyrique de Louis XIV, Discours; Bussy-
Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 104-05;
Callières, Panégyrique historique, 100-01.

42 It should be mentioned that even non-panegyric
historians, who tended to be critical of the king in other
matters, agreed that his physical portrait was majestic.
See, for example, Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 190;
the two were welded together, so that the ruler and the individual were seen as one. There was no difference between the public and private person.

Following the legacy of the medieval theory, panegyrists of Louis XIV portrayed him with super-human qualities. His superiority stemmed from his divine birth, they claimed. Louis was designated both as the "most-Christian" king, and as a "hero". He was blessed with perfection, which set him apart from other men and from previous rulers. How fitting, then, was the image of the sun, which was applied to Louis XIV from the 1660's. This image seemed consistent with the grandeur, majesty, and divinity of the king. All these symbols—that of the heroic, the sun, the divine, the Christian—were freely intermingled by panegyrists in the commemoration of their protagonist.43

43 See Faure, Louis le Grand, 12-16, 245; Bérginy, Histoire de France, en vers, 1-3, 339, 364, 405; La Serre, Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième, 10, 17; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 28-29; Callières, Panégyrique historique, 71-72; Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV, II, 246; Boyer des Roches, Panégyrique de Louis XIV, 18, 45, 47; Jean Racine, Oeuvres de J. Racine, ed. M. Paul Mesnard (Paris, 1865), V, 28; Menestrier, Histoire du roy Louis le Grand par les médailles, 1, 4, 10.

It should also be noted that all historians, both panegyrists and independent authors, agreed that Louis displayed real grandeur at the end of his reign. His nobility, his self-control, his Christian fortitude, his heroism, in the face of personal misfortune and physical suffering, truly earned him the appellation "grand". See
In addition to his general image, Louis XIV also fulfilled certain functions. He was foremost a warrior. His panegyrists most often depicted him as the head of the French army. As God's omniscient lieutenant, he was granted full credit for the successes of his troops. As a brilliant general, he inspired his men on to success. His courage and bravery, it was claimed, spurred the troops to victory. With the spirit of a conqueror, he was remorseless in creating strict military discipline amongst his troops, in reforming the army's organization, and in achieving his military goals. But, they continued, let it never be said that their King thirsted for blood and power. Moderating his aims with rationality and virtue, the King always showed his fatherly kindness to both his own troops and to those of his enemies.44


44 Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV, II, 179; Courtiz de Sandras, Histoire de la guerre de Hollande, 5, 90-91; part 2, 10-11, 47; Courtiz de Sandras, Mémoires, 102 C. 115, 1791, 214, 232-32; Ziegler, 329-30, 338-39; Larrey, Histoire de France, 9, 11, 14; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 54-55, 364-65; Callières, Panégyrique
The kindness, or Christianity, of the king was another trait which was recalled with frequency. Even Louis XIV refers to his duties as father of his subjects in his Mémoires. The King, it was maintained, always was mindful of the care, the safety, the felicity, and the tranquility owed to his people. His concerns as the father of his flock were numerous and varied. Whether in military conquest, in the creation of peace, in the reformation of finance, in the distribution of grain and feeds, in the reorganization of government, in the education of the nobility, in the drafting of legislation, in the crushing of internal rebellion, or in the creation of a police force, Louis XIV always acted for the well-being of the French people. According to his panegyrists, all of his acts can be associated with his fatherly devotion, and his Christian historique, 12-13; Mercure Galant, "Affaires du Temps" (October, 1688), 25-28; Bérigny, Histoire de France, en vers, 349; Faure, Louis le Grand, 87, 91-107; Finé de Brianville, Abregé methodique, 338-41.

Many of the panegyists of the reign, content to write abrégés chronologiques, did not give space to this adulation of Louis' abilities as a warrior. Nonetheless, they devoted most of their work to listing the military accomplishments of the reign. This, in itself, indicated the importance they attached to Louis' role as a warrior. See Bussy-Rabutin, Histoire en abrégé de Louis le Grand, 352-55; Marolles, Histoire des roys de France; La Serre, Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième; Mirat de la Tour, Discours historique; Callières, Panégyrique historique; Médailles du regne de Louis le Grand; Finé de Brianville, Abregé methodique, 342-44.

45 Mémoires, 36, 96.
tenderness.\textsuperscript{46}

As the "most-christian" King, Louis also had a responsibility to protect the religious heritage of his nation. To Louis, this meant that the uniformity of the Catholic religion had to be preserved within his lands. His formal acts against both Jansenists and Huguenots were praised by his historians as efforts to preserve the faith. His legislation against blasphemy and duelling, it was argued, exposed his Christian spirit. Louis XIV himself claimed that all the acts undertaken by a king should reveal his veneration for God:

\ldots nous ne manquons pas seulement de reconnaissance et de justice, mais de prudence et de bon sens, quand nous manquons de vénération pour celui dont nous ne sommes que les lieutenants. Notre soumission pour lui est la règle et l'exemple de celle qui nous est due.\textsuperscript{47}

The King's Christianity, then, was demonstrated not only by his tenderness, but by his conscious actions as defender of the faith.


Finally, Louis was lauded as the fountainhead of justice. His responsibility was to compose the laws with complete impartiality. To this obligation, the King responded earnestly, reforming inequities in the political, economic, and judicial systems. Under his reign, the civil and criminal codes were reformed and simplified. As both the judge and source of legislation, the King displayed perfect moderation and control in all his actions. He never showed favoritism, he never was irrational in his judgments of the law, he never responded rashly or unfairly. Louis was the Justinian of the seventeenth century. Such, at least, was the contention of his historiographies.48

In four major functions—as warrior, protector of the faith, judge, and father of his people—Louis personified the ideal king. In the view of his panegyrists, he also had the character traits to match: he was proud, noble, heroic, resolute and determined; he was pious, zealous, august, and virtuous; he was moderate, equitable, patient, judicious, prudent, and wise; and he was generous, noble, accessible, and kind.49 But there were also two other areas

48 Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, 116; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 57-58; Court-ilz de Sandras, Mémoires, 111-12; Calières, Panégyrique historique, 77-78, 19-20, 43-44; La Motte le Noble, Histoire panégyrique de Louis XIV, 4; Médailles du regne de Louis le Grand, 61; Riencourt, Histoire de la monarchie française, II, 452; Larrey, Histoire de France, II, 504-505.

49 These were the terms used most often to describe the King's character. See Pellisson, Histoire de Louis XIV,
of accomplishment which panegyrist wished to note and
commemorate, though they frequently did not associate these
achievements with the attributes of kingship. In both
financial and artistic affairs, the King of France revealed
his magnificence.

Louis' critics had often contended that he had
squandered the financial resources of the kingdom, and had
burdened his subjects with taxes so that he could engage in
wars of glory. To counterbalance this view, his apologists
tried to argue that Louis in fact increased the economic well-
being of France. They pointed to his dismissal of Fouquet,
to his reorganization of the financial administration, to his
suppression of various impositions, and to his extension of
commercial and manufacturing activities. All these acts,
they claimed, revealed Louis' devotion to his people, and
commitment to his country.50

I, 41-42; Boyer des Roches, Panégyrique de Louis XIV, 13-14,
49-50, 57-67, 75-79; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 87;
Epistalier, Le parfait monarque, 2-6; Riencourt, Histoire
de la monarchie française, I, Epistre, M iii-a viii;
Callières, Panégyrique historique, 99; Mirat de la Tour,
Discours historique, 28; La Motte le Noble, Panégyrique de
Louis XIV, Discours; Vertron, Parallele de Louis le grand,
8-9, 41-42; Faure, Louis le Grand, 11, 17-18, 229-30; Racine,
"Précis historique," Oeuvres, V, 300; Fréjacq, Panégyrique
du roy, 7, 11. See also Quincy, Histoire militaire, VII,
407, 414-17; Larrey, Histoire de France, III, 226, 229-31;
Limiers, Histoire du règne de Louis XIV, II, part 1, 106;
III, 3-4; Sourches, Mémoires, I, 249; Jourdan, Histoire de
France, I, Epitre, x; Le Ragois, Instruction sur l'histoire
de France, 166, 168.

50 Faure, especially, believed the finances of the
State essential to its perpetuation. Comparing the State
Likewise, his patronage of the arts exhibited his grandeur, generosity, and magnificence. Not only in the establishment of academies for painting, architecture, sculpture, and music, but also by the erection of beautiful public edifices, Louis exhibited the splendor of his reign. Versailles was a shrine to his artistry. The Arc de Triomphe commemorated his appreciation of classic beauty. In short, panegyrist maintained that Louis XIV elevated the tastes of his subjects by his cultural interests.  

The political philosophy of most panegyrist was uncomplicated. Since their purpose was to glorify the king, to the human being, a fallacy indicative of many Enlightenment thinkers, Faure presents a theory of the perpetual circulation of the economy. He writes: "Chacun sçait, que le cœur a deux mouvements opposez; Par l'un, il attire l'air et le sang; Par l'autre, il s'en décharge .... Il en est de mesme du Corps politique, dans lequel le tresor Royal tient la place du cœur; il s'entretient naturellement par deux mouvements; Par l'un, il se remplit; Par l'autre, il se vide. L'Epargne est comme la Mer, où entrent, et d'où sortent successivement les Finances; et par cette circulation perpetuelle, le corps de l'Estat se conserve dans une parfaite vigueur." (Faure, Louis le Grand, 47-48.) For references to Louis' economic accomplishments, see Faure, ibid., 47, 51, 60, 62-65; Courtiz de Sandras, Mémoires, 114-15; Callières, Panégyrique historique, 65-68; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 61; Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, 129.

51 Callières, Panégyrique historique, 56-61, 69-70; Richard, Discours sur l'histoire des fondations royales, 62-64, 76, 80; Le Gendre, Essai de l'histoire, 58-60; Faure, Louis le Grand, 104-105.
there was no necessity for a refined political theory. In their minds, ruler, state, and society could be merged into one. The character and the accomplishments of the king could also be treated as one, since no differentiation was made between the public and private person.

All kings, they believed, were endowed with basic traits and responsibilities which were not subject to change. This perception represented the antithesis of historical awareness. To most panegyrists, whatever development occurred throughout time was insignificant, since the attributes of kingship were universal and eternal. By emphasizing these unchanging characteristics, panegyrists chose to ignore the distinctly unique and historical circumstances of a given reign. They chose to represent Louis as a type rather than as an individual. They chose to use terminology which elicited favorable comparisons with past historical figures. While they frequently used historical example, they did so in a way which would establish universal, unchanging patterns of behavior and of rule. Their language was classical and formalized. Their scope was limited to the king. Their causal analyses were made to fit their theme. In short, panegyrists did not, for the most part, think in historical terms. While following the form of the histoire raisonnée, they did nothing to distinguish its content.

It is the panegyrists of the reign—Racine, Boileau,
de Callières—who have been best known to historical critics. The judgments about seventeenth-century historical writing have been based, in large part, on the works of these apologists. Their ahistorical perspective has given a poor reputation to an entire century of historical work. But the panegyristes represent only one group—the least distinguished—of authors of the *histoire raisonnée*.
CONCLUSION

French historians writing during the years ca. 1660-ca. 1720 created a synthetic genre of narrative history—a genre which can be called appropriately the *histoire raisonnée*. From the Renaissance and ancient classicists, they absorbed the idea that history was a literary art, combining rhetoric with eloquence, and moral teaching with stylistic beauty. From the sixteenth-century *érudits*, they inherited the concept that history was a science, that historical data had to be carefully selected from dusty archival sources, and that accuracy was its own reward. The historians added to these diverse concepts the thought that "reasoned" embellishments by the author—whether of a moral, political, or cultural nature—were necessary to fulfill the purposes for which they were writing. A work of history, they argued, should both instruct and amuse. The digressions of the author would help to do both. These embellishments, it should be added, were quite distinct from the Renaissance techniques of imaginary speeches, harangues, and maxims, appended primarily for their grammatical value. The digressions by the authors of the *histoire raisonnée* were sometimes analytical in nature, and served to bring coherence to a
series of disconnected historical facts. These digressions gave the historian an opportunity to explain the meaning of historical events according to his perceptions.

Authors of the *histoire raisonnée* thus combined art, philosophy, and erudition in a narrative form. What is now apparent to the student of historiography is that inherent dichotomies existed in this uneasy mixture. In the first place, how were historians to blend together the often conflicting purposes of amusement and instruction? Were artistic values ever consistent with pedagogical ones? If not, which were to give way? And secondly, there existed a clear conflict, stemming from Cartesian philosophy, between fact and moral, or between history and philosophy.

Descartes stated that exact knowledge could be determined through the application of a rigorous scientific method of skepticism and doubt. Through this method of reasoning, man could begin to perfect his knowledge, thereby facilitating the continuous progress of civilization. This philosophy of doubt marked a distinct break from medieval scholastic trust in divine essences and traditional truths. Descartes, it appeared, had crossed the bridge from medieval thought patterns to a more modern, empirical, and scientific view of the natural world surrounding him. This part of his philosophy was thoroughly consistent with the *érudit*'s perception of history as a scientific and critical inquiry to establish factual accuracy.
However, there was another side to Cartesianism, which revealed a conflict in Descartes' thought pattern. Systematic doubt, and scientific investigations—if properly applied—would uncover certain eternal truths, or principles, which were universally applicable and which would lead to future certainty and predictability. These truths were based on philosophical insight, rather than historical research. There was thus a distinct difference between the methods of philosophy and of history. The principle could contradict the specific example, and in that case, it was always the principle which represented the superior truth.¹

How was the historian, then, to unite scientific methods with metaphysical principles? Which should represent the higher truth—the fact or the value? Since authors of the histoire raisonnée sought to combine philosophy and history in their narratives—two dissimilar kinds of knowledge, according to Cartesianism—how could the two be made to cohere?

These questions, clear to us, did not seem to bother the historians of the seventeenth century. They lived with the dualisms, and apparently did not notice the contradictions in their thought and work. Despite their vociferous claims of the absolute accuracy of their work, they often

neglected the distinctly factual to better illustrate some moral or political "truth." Likewise, the techniques which these historians thought would amuse their readers often took precedence over those which would instruct. The uneasy synthesis of "unlikes" formed the genre of the histoire raisonnée.

In spite of the philosophical inconsistencies of these authors, their works have real value for the development of historical thought in the seventeenth century. By their efforts, they brought together heretofore diverse conceptions of history, and proved that they could be united into one narrative. Neither totally accepting nor totally rejecting either the humanist or erudite theories of history, they used both for their own purposes.

In form alone, therefore, authors of the histoire raisonnée expanded the concept of which elements could be brought together in a work of history. Science, art, and philosophy were combined in this structure. The citation of sources, the criticism of documents, the analysis of data was welded together with the classical rules of vraisemblance, bienséance, and le merveilleux. The philosophical embellishments of the authors were their way to portray the moral teachings of historical materials.

Because of their philosophical interests, authors of the histoire raisonnée were able to move away from a strictly chronological listing of historical facts. What was a
curse—the rejection of the fact for its own sake—was also a blessing for the development of historical consciousness. For by these embellishments, authors were forced to make some sense out of historical data, and were forced to treat a series of events as a unit. In this effort, the scope of history was broadened.

In terms of the scope of the histoire raisonnée, it must be admitted that the ideas of these authors were considerably more advanced than was their practice. In theory, they recognized the importance of discussing customs, laws, and habits of men in a work of history. In practice, their narratives were limited largely to a political and military context. Yet, the reign of Louis XIV stimulated their interest in many new areas of history. The court, the arts, the economy, and to a small extent, the popular responses, came under the aegis of the historian in the course of discussing the reign. Moreover, some initial efforts were made to branch out into institutional or cultural history. Of particular note in this regard are the works of Paul Pellisson, Louis Le Gendre, and Henri de Boulainvilliers. Portraiture, also, was a means to broaden the scope of historical inquiry, and to this period and genre of historical writing, we owe the beginnings of psychological analysis of human motivations.

The analyses of these authors—in part an emanation of the author’s moralizing—revealed their interest in the
causes of historical change and development. For these historians, cause was a distinctly secular phenomenon. They often found the causes of events in human beings, who were motivated by their own psyches and ambitions. But there were also multiple factors at work: there were the particular historical circumstances, there were distinct long-term factors, and there were specific immediate impulses.

The more astute historians of this period recognized the diversities in cultures which gave rise to the varied responses amongst men. Assuming that all men were ideally the same, they could explain their different reactions on the basis of cultural factors.

There was a wide variance of sophistication on this issue of causal explanation. Perhaps the most significant fact, however, is simply that authors of the histoire raisonnée were interested in cause. To explain the cause of an event—the motivations of the men involved, the circumstances which gave rise to their feelings, etc.—was also to present a moral commentary or to make clear a political reality. Through their explanations of cause, these historians posed as philosophers as well as technicians.

It should be emphasized that the historical consciousness of these authors was more apparent in their theoretical statements than in their historiographical practices. What they wrote about factual accuracy, the
breadth of history, and the causation of events, was more impressive than the treatment of these factors in their narrative. But the important point is that a framework was established, and a new type of narrative composition was begun. Humanism comprised only one part of their conception of history. History was not an appendage to literature, but it was a philosophical art. To clothe their view of history, they created the genre of the *histoire raisonnée*.

Historians generally look to the eighteenth century for the beginnings of modern historical thought. This study suggests, however, that the fifty-five year period of time preceding the Enlightenment saw the development of many of the same themes that later historians would develop and bring to maturity. In both centuries, history often was perceived as a secular, philosophical discipline, which combined artistry with erudition. During both periods, historians saw themselves as moralists, whose function it was to create meaning and instruction out of the bare detail. As Diderot wrote: "'Some may think that a knowledge of history should precede that of morality: I am not of that opinion: it seems to me more useful and expedient to possess the idea of the just and the unjust before possessing a knowledge of the actions and the men to whom one ought to apply it.'"\(^2\)

in Cartesian thought remained unresolved. The eighteenth-century historians; for the most part, were likewise interested in determining principles or laws of human behavior, and had no appreciation for the isolated fact. Almost all of the philosophes, including Diderot, D'Alembert, Saint-Pierre, Condorcet, Montesquieu, and Rousseau maintained this dualistic position. In Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, he states: "Let us begin then by laying facts aside as they do not affect the question." It was the principles which historians sought, rather than the individual details.

A brief examination of the philosophy of Voltaire will elucidate my conclusions. It is known that Voltaire consulted numerous historians of the seventeenth century, to whom he owed an obvious debt. Limiers, Larrey, and Boulainvilliers were amongst the models he followed in the construction of his own works. For Voltaire, history was

---


4Frankel, ibid., 117.

5Brumfit, Voltaire: Historian, 59-60; Simon, Henry de Boulainvillier, 46-47. It should also be noted that Voltaire mentions numerous erudite historians in his Catalogue des écrivains, including Achéry, Baluze, Mabillon, Montfaucon, Tillemont, Pétau, Simon. (Brumfit, ibid., 133.) Wade also indicates that the historians of greatest interest to Voltaire were Bossuet, Bayle, Fontenelle, Fenelon, Boulainvilliers, and Bolingbroke. (Wade, The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, 470-73.)
an art, a science, and a philosophy. The dramatic form of the work--its style, its literary merit--was crucial to the value of the history and Voltaire often criticized historians for their stylistic weaknesses. History should amuse and please, not bore, Voltaire claimed. The real value, of course, stemmed from the moral teachings within. Voltaire's greatest contribution to historiography arose from his recognition that morality could best be taught through cultural history. Yet, he too, like his contemporaries and his predecessors, could not resolve the Cartesian fact-value dualism. As a classicist, Voltaire believed that human nature should follow certain norms: yet, he also recognized that men always responded differently as a result of diverse customs and situations. If Voltaire believes in the constancy of human nature, Cassirer asks, "can there be a philosophical history in the strict sense? Does not the illusion of change and development vanish the moment one penetrates beneath the glittering surface of appearances and approaches the underlying principles which are always one and the same? Would not then philosophical insight put an end to history?" These questions, so appropriate to the works of Voltaire, can easily

6 Wade, The Intellectual Development of Voltaire, 491.
7 Brumfitt, Voltaire: Historian, 26, 30; Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, 222.
8 Cassirer, ibid., 219.
be asked of seventeenth-century historians as well. The same conflicts penetrated historical works during both centuries.

Voltaire's philosophy of history also reveals inconsistencies in his thought. In the Siècle de Louis XIV, he adhered to a "great man" theory of history, arguing that the historical changes which had occurred could be attributed largely to the greatness of Louis XIV. In this way, Voltaire followed in the footsteps of the panegyrists of the seventeenth century. Yet, in his Essai sur les moeurs, he argued that history should bring out the esprit of a nation and should explain its customs and habits. His greatest contribution comes from this stress on cultural history. Even this was not an innovation, for the concept of a cultural history which exposed the spirit of the country and of the particular age had been introduced by seventeenth-century historians. Yet, in the study of historiography, the development, as well as the innovation, of concepts is significant. \(^9\) And while Voltaire's works were still largely political in scope, he did expand the scope of political history to come closer to social and cultural history.

The historian to bring the values of the authors of

---

the *histoire raisonnée* to fruition was L'Abbé Jean Baptiste DuBos (1670-1742). He did not publish his *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules* until 1735, and therefore, he has not formed a part of the group under study. But, he was a man more closely associated with the reign of Louis XIV, having served under Louis' well-known minister Torcy, than were most eighteenth-century historians. His primary virtue as a historian was his profound understanding of the complexity of facts and the breadth of the historian's domain. In his own work, he revealed his deep commitment to factual accuracy, to the study of the origins of the French nation, and to the verification of sources. But he was more than an *érudit*. For he also posited the belief that history revealed the progress of civilization, and thereby, he committed himself to a philosophy of history. His work showed an appreciation for historical change, variation, and complexity. In short, DuBos brought together the values expressed by authors of the *histoire raisonnée*, and actually put into practice their theory. He was a critical historian, who constructed the first constitutional history of a country, in which the complexities of the human situation and the relativity of circumstances were exposed.

These historians of the Enlightenment, it is true, were conscious of the value of history. But it must be remembered that their ideas germinated from their predecessors of the period ca. 1660-ca. 1720. And the histoire raisonnée—that hybrid genre combining diverse conceptions of historical writing—provided the framework and the working model for the development of their thoughts.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:


Boulainvilliers, Henri, Comte de. *État de la France, dans lequel on voit tout ce qui regarde le gouvernement ecclésiastique, le militaire, la justice, les finances, le commerce, les manufactures, le nombre des habitants, et en general tout ce qui peut faire connoître a fond cette monarchie.* 6 vols. London, 1737.


_______. *Mémoires presentez à monseigneur le duc d'Orleans, regent de France.* The Hague, 1727.


________. Histoire de la guerre de Hollande. Où l'on voit ce qui est arrivé de plus remarquable depuis l'année 1672 jusques en 1677. The Hague, 1689.

________. Mémoires contenant divers événemens remarquables, arrivés sous le règne de Louis le Grand. Cologne, 1684.

________. Remarques sur le gouvernement du royaume durant les regnes de Henry IV, de Louys XIII, et de Louys XIV. Cologne, 1688.

________. Testament politique de messire Jean Baptiste Colbert. The Hague, 1711.


Epistalier, Jean. Le parfait monarque, ou les augustes caractères et les heroiques vertus de Louis le grand, appliquées à l'histoire de sa majesté. Chartres, 1697.


La Fare, Charles Auguste de. Mémoires et réflexions sur les principaux evenemens du regne de Louis XIV, et sur le caractere de ceux qui ont eu la principale part dans les affaires secrettes de France. Rotterdam, 1717.


La Motte le Noble. Histoire panegyrique de Louis XIV, roy de France, sous le nom de heros incomparable. Rouen, 1673.


La Rochefoucauld, François, Duc de, and De la Chastre. Mémoires de la minorité de Louis XIV. Villefranche, 1690.


La Serre, Jean Puget de. L'histoire d'Auguste et le
parallèle de cet illustre monarque avec nostre grand

______. Panégyrique de Louis quatorzième, roy de France
et de Navarre. N.p., n.d.

Le Clerc, Jean. La vie du Cardinal duc de Richelieu.

Le Gendre, Louis. Essai de l'histoire du règne de Louis le
grand jusques à la paix générale 1697. Cologne, 1700.

______. Histoire de France, contenant le règne des rois

______. Moeurs et coutumes des François dans les

______. Nouvelle histoire de France, depuis le commencer-
ment de la monarchie, jusques à la mort de Louis XIII.

Lelong, Jacques. Bibliothèque historique de la France,
contenant le catalogue des ouvrages, imprimés et
manuscrits, qui traitent de l'histoire de ce royaume,
on qui y ont rapport, avec des notes critiques et
historique. Reviewed, corrected, and augmented by

Le Moyne, Pierre. On the Art both of Writing and Judging
of History, with Reflections upon Ancient as well as

Lenglet Dufresnoy, Nicolas, M. l'Abbé de. Méthode pour
étudier l'histoire, avec un catalogue des principaux

______. Supplément de la méthode pour étudier l'histoire.
Paris, 1740.

Le Ragois, Claude Abbé. Instruction sur l'histoire de

Lesconvel, Pierre de. Observations critiques sur
l'histoire de France écrite par Mézerai. Paris, 1700.

Le Vassor, Michel. The History of the Reign of Lewis XIII,
King of France and Navarre. 3 vols. London, 1700.

Limiers, Henri Philippe de. Annales de la monarchie
française. Amsterdam, 1724.


_________. *Les divers caracteres, des ouvrages historiques. Avec le plan d'une nouvelle histoire de la ville de Lyon.* Lyon, 1694.

Mézeray, François Eudes de. *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France.* Amsterdam, 1682.


La science de l'histoire, avec le jugement des principaux historiens tant anciens que modernes. Paris, 1665.

"Supplement des traitez de la connoissance des bons livres," in *De la prudence ou des bonnes reigles de la vie.* Paris, 1673.


Mémoires contenant ce qui s'est passé de plus memorables en France, depuis l'établissement de la monarchie jusqu'à présent. The Hague, 1701.


Warmund, Polidorus [pseud.]. *La source veritable de la grandeur de France.* N.p., 1683.

Anonymous:

*Histoire de la decadence de la France, prouvee par sa conduite.* Cologne, 1687.


*La France demasqueée, ou ses irregulartez dans sa conduite, et maximes.* The Hague, 1670.

*L'esprit de la France et les maximes de Louis XIV, decouvertes à l'Europe.* Cologne, 1688.

Le justin moderne, ou le détail des affaires de ce temps. Villefranche, 1677.

Recueil historique contenant diverses pièces curieuses de ce temps. Cologne, 1666.

Journals of the Period:

Bibliothèque choisie. Edited by Jean Le Clerc. Amsterdam, 1703-1714.


La gazette d’Amsterdam. 1663-1676.


Gazette de Rotterdam, and Journal historique. Rotterdam, 1699-1716.


Lettres historiques, contenant ce qui se passé de plus important en Europe, et les réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet. The Hague, 1692-1728.


Mercure historique et politique, contenant l’état présent de l’Europe, ce qui se passe dans toutes les cours, l’intérêt des princes, leurs brigues, et généralement tout ce qu’il y a de curieux pour le mois de ... Parma, 1686 ff.

Le mercure hollandais, contenant les choses les plus remarquables de toute la terre. Amsterdam, 1672-1684.
Nouveau journal universel. Amsterdam, 1688-1690.


Secondary Works:

Bibliographies and Dictionaries:


Toinet, Raymond. "Les écrivains moralistes au XVIIe siècle; essai d'une table alphabétique des ouvrages publiés pendant le siècle de Louis XIV--1638-1715--qui traitent


Books:


Church, William F. *Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1941.


Gierke, Otto. Political Theories of the Middle Age. Translated with introduction by Frederic W. Maitland. Cambridge, 1900.


Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology.* Princeton, 1957.


Tilley, Arthur A. The Decline of the Age of Louis XIV or French Literature 1687-1715. Cambridge, 1929.


Periodicals and Articles:


Barnes, Sherman B., and Alfred A. Skerpan. Historiography under the Impact of Rationalism and Revolution. (A Bulletin publication of Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.) Vol. XL, No. 10 (October, 1952).


Denis, Dom Paul. "Dom Mabillon et sa méthode historique." Revue Mabillon, VI, No. 21 (May, 1910), 1-64.


